MAY 3, 2021

# SECRETARIAT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# ALLOCATION FOR A REGIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GRANT TO EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

| Reference | Decision |
|---|---|
| **CEO/2021/05-01** | **Allocation for a Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant to Eastern Caribbean States**<br><br>The CEO, in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors:<br><br>1. Notes that the ESPIG request has been assessed based on the relevant QAR processes for funding model requirements and program standards. The request is in the compliance with the requirements and standards for accessing the maximum country allocations for a Regional ESPIG, as described in the application and assessed in the Secretariat quality assurance review phase III report.<br><br>2. Approves an allocation from GPE trust funds for an ESPIG, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table 1, subject to:<br><br>a. Availability of funds |

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| | b. Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for ESPIGs in annual installments.<br><br>c. Review Meeting's recommendation for funding set out in Table 1.<br><br>3. Requests the Trustee to withhold the transfer of funds should the outstanding actions captured in the institutional strengthening action plan not be met.<br><br>4. Requests the Secretariat to:<br><br>a. Include in its notification of grant approval to the Eastern Caribbean States the requests for observations, report-backs and conditions as recommended by the Review Meeting and set out in Table 2.<br><br>b. Include an update on the issues listed as "report backs" and "conditions" in the Grant Performance Report in accordance with the specified timeline. |

**Table 1: Application Summary and Allocation Recommendations (in US $):**

| **Country: Eastern Caribbean States**[1] | | |
|---|---|---|
| a. | ESPIG Maximum Country Allocation | 10,000,000 |
| b. | Allocation Requested (100%) | 10,000,000 |
| c. | Fixed Part | 10,000,000 |
| **d.** | **Allocation Recommended** | **10,000,000** |
| e. | Grant Agent | Organization of Eastern Caribbean States |
| f. | Agency Fee % - Amount | 700,000 |
| g. | Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs | 1,007,187 [2] |
| h. | Period | 4 years |
| i. | Expected Start Date | July 1st, 2021 |
| j. | Funding Source | GPE Fund |

[1] Eastern Caribbean States allocation is a multi-country allocation, including Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

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

**Table 2 – Review Meeting Observations, Report-Backs, And Conditions**

| **Country: Eastern Caribbean States** | |
|---|---|
| **Observations** | The Secretariat would like to commend the OECS Commission, the Member States, and all the partners for developing a strong regional program with a clear vision and direction for both the regional and national level. The effort, reflection, and collaboration between the regional body and Member States is particularly recognized. |
| **Report Back** | Report-back on annual figures of domestic financing for the education sector as data becomes available.<br><br>Report-back on all baselines and targets in the Results Framework in the first annual report.<br><br>Report-back on the targeting criteria that will be used to select vulnerable communities that will benefit from refurbished ECD classrooms in the first annual report. |
| **Condition** | Transfer of funds are conditional on OECS satisfactorily addressing outstanding actions stemming from the accreditation process, captured within the institutional strengthening action plan.<br><br>Secretariat prior approval is required for any re-allocation of grant funds from the national level to the regional level. |

## Annex A – Secretariat quality assurance review phase III report

# QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – PHASE 3 (SECRETARIAT DELEGATED AUTHORITY)

APRIL 2021

## EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

**Regional Education Sector Program Implementation Grant**

**Proposed GPE Grant Amount: US$10 million**
**Fixed Part: US$10 million, of which US$ 1,007,187 for Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs**
**Variable Part: Not applicable**
**Implementation period: 4 years**
**Projected implementation start date: July 1st, 2021**
**Grant Agent: The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States**

## 1 BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION SECTOR OVERVIEW

### 1.1. COUNTRY BACKGROUND

The Caribbean Regional application encompasses four Small Island Developing States (SIDS)- Dominica (DOM), Grenada (GRD), St. Lucia (SLU) and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), who decided to adopt a regional approach and combine their Maximum Country Allocations (MCAs) of US$2.5 million each into a single regional application for an Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG). The Caribbean application is unique in many ways and for this reason, the assessment of the US$10 million regional ESPIG has benefited from additional layers of scrutiny and critical examination. In addition to being a multi-country application that will support the implementation of a regional education sector plan, ESPIG funds will also support the development of regional public goods and include the participation of non-GPE Member States. Given the OECS Commission's role as Grant Agent and its institutional mandate to lead and coordinate implementation of the regional education sector plan, the Secretariat closely examined the nature of regional activities and expenditures, program implementation costs, and considered possible areas of conflict of interest. This report presents the outcomes of the Secretariat's assessment, which was guided by the

policies and parameters set out in GPE's Regional ESPIG Guidelines[1].The four Caribbean SIDS are part of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), an economic union that was established by the 1981 Treaty of Basseterre and the 2011 Revised Treaty of Basseterre. The OECS seeks to promote unity, cooperation, and regional integration amongst the 11 Member States for the collective benefit of its members and sustainable development of the region. The case for regionalism is strong in the Caribbean given the proximity of the islands and commonalities shared. Working together to address common challenges enables countries to reap the benefits of economies of scale, overcome constraints faced by small states, and more rapidly and efficiently achieve shared goals.

The small, open, and heavily tourism dependent economies of the OECS face common challenges including low economic growth, high debt, persistent fiscal deficits and vulnerabilities to external shocks.[2] Unemployment rates are high and are above 20% for GRD, SLU, and SVG, placing them in the highest decile in the world.[3] Given the high exposure to natural disasters and frequent need to re-invest in infrastructure and social programs, public debt in OECS Member States has also increased to 68% in 2018, surpassing prudential levels.[4] While levels of extreme poverty rate are low, moderate levels of poverty remain high and are linked with the prevalence of female-headed households.

The Caribbean is the second most environmental hazard-prone region in the world.[5] Climate change and other natural disasters have a negative impact not only on the economy, but on human lives and people's livelihoods. Average annual losses from hurricanes alone in the Caribbean are estimated at US$835 million and reached 226% of 2016 GDP in Dominica following Hurricane Maria.[6] Rising temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, and more extreme weather events are also expected, further threatening to erode progress made.

The economic and social fragility of the region has been compounded by the effects of COVID-19. The tourism sector, which on average accounts for 40% of GDP in the 4 GPE Member States, has been particularly affected and led to a significant decline in incomes and employment. School closures and the transition to distance learning has increased the vulnerability of those

[1] GPE (2020). Guidelines for regional education sector program implementation grants. Consulted April 13th 2021, available online at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidelines-regional-education-sector-program-implementation-grants
[2] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 5.
[3] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 5.
[4] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 8.
[5] OCHA (2020). Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: 2000-2019. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20191203-ocha-desastres_naturales.pdf
[6] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 8.

most in need, who are unable to access basic services and continue learning at the same pace as their peers. The road to economic and social recovery will be long and is likely to lead to even higher public debt levels in the medium term.

| Eastern Caribbean States | |
|---|---|
| **Population (Thousands, in 2019[7])** | DOM: 71.8<br>GRD: 112.0<br>SLU: 182.8<br>SVG: 110.6 |
| **Human Development Index Ranking (for 2019[8])** | DOM: 98 /189 (high HDI)<br>GRD: 78 /189 (high HDI)<br>SLU: 89 /189 (high HDI)<br>SVG: 94 /189 (high HDI) |
| **Learning-adjusted Years of School (in 2020[9])** | DOM: Boys:7.7 Girls:8.4<br>GRD: Boys:7.9 Girls:8.7<br>SLU: Boys:8.2 Girls:8.8<br>SVG: Boys:7.3 Girls:8.2 |
| **GDP (In millions of USD for 2019[10])** | DOM: 506.6<br>GRD: 1,045.0<br>SLU: 1,079.2<br>SVG: 757.8 |
| **GDP per capita (In USD for 2019[11])** | DOM: 7,055.5<br>GRD: 9,330.0<br>SLU: 9,350.7<br>SVG: 6,852.5 |
| **World Bank Income Classification Level (for 2020-21[12])** | DOM: Upper Middle Income<br>GRD: Upper Middle Income<br>SLU: Upper Middle Income<br>SVG: Upper Middle Income |

[7] World Bank Data, population, total, Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL

[8] United Nations Development Program. (2019). Human Development Report 2019, Tables 7 to 15, Page 5, available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/statistical-data-tables-7-15

[9] World Bank, Human Capital Project. Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital

[10] World Bank Data, GDP (constant 2010 US$). Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD

[11] World Bank Data, GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$). Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD

[12] World Bank Country and Lending groups. Available online at, consulted Dec 1st 2020: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519

## 1.2. EDUCATION SECTOR OVERVIEW

The four GPE Caribbean islands have a combined population of about 475,000 people out of which 13,000 are of pre-primary age, 46,000 are of primary age and 34,000 are of secondary-school age[13]. Education systems are very small, with the number of schools in the four islands ranging from 59 to 73 primary schools and from 15 to 27 secondary schools. Basic education is compulsory and consists of one year of pre-primary, 6 years of primary, and 5 years of secondary.

### 1.2.1. A regional approach to sector development

The Caribbean states have long recognized the value of working together to overcome disadvantages linked to their small-size and build greater resilience and scale in the education sector. Since 1981, the OECS Commission has supported joint education initiatives determined through a Council of Ministers of Education and supported by the OECS Education Development Management Unit (EDMU). In May 2011, the Council of Ministers of Education endorsed the ten-year OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS), providing a framework for educational development in the region, later extended to 2026. The OESS aims to ensure that every learner can succeed and encompasses 7 education imperatives, with a focus on the most vulnerable. Since its approval in 2011, 9 Member States of the OECS, including the 4 GPE Member States, have sought to implement the objectives through individual and collective action under the leadership of the EDMU. The regional priorities of the OESS reflect the national priorities of Member States, with most strategies implemented at the country level. Through the regional approach, implementation at country level can benefit from the use of regional public goods, common institutional infrastructure, technical assistance, and cooperation. The regional approach thus helps to leverage the expertise of other islands, compensate for small over-extended ministries, and accelerate the pace of development.

### 1.2.2 Equity:

All Member States have achieved universal primary education and achieved universal secondary education in 2012. The primary completion rates as reported by UIS are SLU (95%-2018), DOM (114%-2016), GRD (123%-2018), and SVG (106%- 2018), with no significant difference between boys or girls. In 2020, expected years of schooling averaged at a little more than 12 years for the 4 GPE Member States, with gender parity achieved except in SVG, where boys are

[13] Based on information from UIS' country pages for the four countries, retrieved June 15th 2020. http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/dm , http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/gd , http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/lc and http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/vc

at a slight disadvantage. [14] Among the main barriers of education are cost [15] and perceived relevance of secondary education, which particularly affects young males. [16]

Access to pre-primary education remains a challenge in some areas as most of the offer is largely privatized. Regionally, only 61% of the day care facilities and 16% of the preschools are government-owned and operated.[17] Net enrollment rates for pre-primary range from 65% in SVG, 79% in SLU, and 90% in GRD with no information available for Dominica.[18] Small variations in gender participation are also noticeable at the pre-primary level, with more girls enrolled than boys. Low access is mainly due to the inability of families from lower social and economic groups to afford private provision of early childhood development (ECD) services, but low quality of service also plays a role. While the OECS has agreed on a minimum standard of operation, a large number of centers fall short of these standards and a lack of licensing certification and monitoring systems make them difficult to enforce. The region is considering establishing ECD Councils in each country with support from the OECS and UNICEF to further advance in this area.[19]

Opportunities to learn are also limited for children with special education needs (SEN). Little progress has been made in this area and the paucity of data hinders efforts to reach this group. The provision of education services is generally inadequate across Member States, with inadequate planning and no structured monitoring in place. Moreover, SEN policies are also at various stages of development across the region and harmonization of legislation and accompanying regulations is needed. As a result, some of the challenges facing this group include that not all students with SEN are attending special education schools, with some not attending any school at all, and students that are mainstreamed in primary schools are not receiving the support needed for their success. A holistic approach is needed to improve access to quality education for children with special needs in the region, which would include evidence-based planning, strengthened legislation, improved physical facilities and capacities for staff who interact with SEN learners.

[14] World Bank, Human Capital Project. Available online at, retrieved Dec 1st 2020: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital
[15] Organization of Eastern Caribbean States ESP 2012-21 (extended to 2026)
[16] Mary Cobbett & Mike Younger (2012) Boys' educational 'underachievement' in the Caribbean: interpreting the 'problem', Gender and Education, 24:6, 611-625, DOI: 10.1080/09540253.2012.677014
[17] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 24.
[18] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 11.
[19] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 25

### 1.2.3 Learning outcomes:

While access to primary and secondary education has significantly improved over the past decades, the quality of teaching and learning remains a challenge. Results from the primary exit examination show that a substantial number of students are unable to meet the standards (40% in SLU, 38% in DOM, 13% in SVG[20]), with students struggling more in Mathematics than English. [21] At the end of compulsory schooling students write the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Out of the 6,274 students that wrote the CSEC in 2018 (2,891 males and 3,383 females) in the four GPE countries, only 33% attained the benchmark of 5 passes including in English and Math. While the overall number of students reaching the standard of success in CSEC remains low, there have been some small improvements between 2017 and 2018. The percentage of students attaining the benchmark increased from 69.1% to 73.0% in English and from 43.5% to 44.7% in Math, with similar results between females and males.[22]

Few teachers in the OECS have the necessary qualifications to teach Math, contributing to significantly lower student performance in the subject. A study of teacher demand and supply in the OECS revealed that over 40% of teachers at the secondary level were teaching out of field, with a significant gap in the area of Math.[23] Overall, the percentage of trained primary and secondary teachers remains low, particularly in certain countries. The percentage stands at 57% in DOM, 55% in GRD, 80% in SLU and 74% in SVG, with percentages for primary being higher than for secondary in all four countries.[24] Moreover, despite low pupil teacher ratios of about 13:1 in primary and 11:1 in secondary, one in three teachers do not demonstrate effective teacher-child interactions in class. Out of the domains assessed by the CLASS observation tool, teachers performed least well in the area of instruction.[25]

### 1.2.4 Efficiency:

The number of over-aged students and drop-outs are of concern, particularly at the secondary level. Whereas repetition rates for primary are fairly low and range from 2.1-2.8% across the four GPE Member States, rates vary widely for secondary and significantly increase in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SLU: 0.1%, GRD: 3.7%, DOM: 7.4%, SVG: 17.5%).[26] The variance can be attributed to differences in policies across the OECS but is consistently higher for males. In

[20] Results are not directly comparable as SVG used the Caribbean Primary Exist Assessment (CPEA) whereas SLU and DOM used their own national assessments.
[21] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 10.
[22] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Document, page 12.
[23] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 11 and 12.
[24] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 9 and 10.
[25] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 10.
[26] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.

certain grades in secondary, about 30% of students enrolled are more than 2 years over the expected age. In all countries the rate of overage males is at least twice the rate for females. With regards to drop-outs, while rates tend to be low for primary, they range from 7.4% to 15.1% at the secondary level.[27]

As mentioned above, the OECS Member States are characterized by relatively low pupil to teacher ratios across all levels of the education system. In 2017-18, the ratios ranged from 6:1 to 14:1 in pre-primary, 9:1 to 16:1 in primary, and 9:1 to 13:1 in secondary.[28] Governments have often sought to pursue a policy to increase those ratios thereby reducing the allocation to teachers' salaries and reallocating the "savings" to other line items in the education budget.[29] Examples of these policies include consolidating small schools where possible, introducing multi-grade schools in specific locations and having "shared" teachers across schools for certain subjects such as Physical Education, or French / Spanish. Efforts have led to small changes in pupil teacher ratios, as savings are concentrated in specific schools and not well-reflected in the averages. Cost savings is nevertheless allocated to activities such as teacher training, expansion of school feeding, and after school programs.

### 1.2.5 Monitoring of Sector Performance:

The EDMU leads on the implementation and monitoring of the OESS and relies on a system of joint annual planning and reporting to coordinate across the region. Every year, the CEO and Planners of the 9 English speaking Member States implementing the OESS gather to jointly plan and monitor the regional strategy. This meeting is followed by the meeting of the Council of Education Ministers, where Education Ministers gather to take decisions on joint initiatives and share lessons learnt. Development partners, teacher organizations, and universities are invited to attend this meeting, participating in joint monitoring and aligning their efforts accordingly.

A Mid-Term Review of the OESS was conducted in 2019, which led to a Ministerial decision to extend the OESS and develop a new regional implementation plan for 2021-2026. A wide range of partners contributed to the process and endorsed the new implementation plan. The OECS Commission, whose mandate includes coordination across the sector, is working on developing a Terms of Reference to better define the membership, functions, and operations of the Regional Education Group (REG). Partners that have participated and contributed to education sector processes at the regional level thus far include USAID, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, the European Union, Hands Across the Sea,

[27] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.
[28] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.
[29] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program. Program Outlines, page 12.

the University of the West Indies, the Joint Board of Teacher Education, the Caribbean Teacher Union, and the Caribbean Examinations Council.

## 2 ESPIG DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 PAST ESPIG PERFORMANCE, IF APPLICABLE:

The last ESPIG for the four GPE Member States totaled USD$2 million and was approved in 2016, with the World Bank as Grant Agent (GA). The program aimed to tackle low learning outcomes at the primary level by using learning standards to support teaching and learning, improving teacher practices through professional development, strengthening school leadership and accountability, and reinforcing M&E capacity in the sector for evidence-based management and decision-making.

The program was rated moderately satisfactory and met or exceeded three of the four program development objectives. Under component 1 the program finalized learning standards for key subjects in grades 1-6, developed a formative assessment framework to monitor application of those standards, and prepared teachers for its use. Overall, 559 teachers from 50 primary schools across the four countries were trained, representing around 12% to 26% of all primary teachers in each of the countries.[30] This particular program component did not achieve its objective and observed only 24% of primary teachers using formative assessment based on learning standards, rather than its target of 50%.[31] It is nevertheless expected that the percentage of teachers using the formative assessment framework will increase in the following academic years as teachers grow more accustomed to new practices.

Under component 2, a regional framework for continuous teacher professional development was developed, which informed National Professional Development Plans that were then implemented. The program exceeded its target, training and certifying 67% of teachers rather than 50%.[32] Under component 3, a template was developed to support school leaders to report on key metrics related to curriculum delivery and learning in annual school improvement plans (SIP). By project closing, 195 primary schools had an MOE-approved SIP in place, surpassing the target for Intermediate Results Indicator 3, which tracked the number of primary schools with a SIP focused on teacher practice and student learning.[33] The program also included the

[30] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 10.
[31] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 11.
[32] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 11.
[33] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 13.

development and implementation of a competency-based Professional Certification Program for Education Leaders, the development of an Education Leadership Handbook, and a job description and appraisal instrument for principals. As such, the percentage of school leaders reporting on progress of teacher practices and student learning to oversight bodies exceeded targets, reaching 87% as opposed to 50%.[34] Under component 4, the project carried out a needs-assessment on M&E capacity and supported Member States to develop National Monitoring Reports, meeting the target.[35]

Lessons learnt from the program include: 1) "Realistically assess implementation capacity at the project planning stage and include mitigating strategies to ensure effective implementation"- given that both the EDMU and Member States struggled with the additional workload from the project, which was relieved by recruiting Local Support Teams in the Member States; 2) "When Project components and activities are interrelated, consider consolidating procurement of consulting services" and; 3) "Consider and consult the end user when developing deliverables and timelines"- particularly teachers and trainers that had a challenging time keeping pace and assimilating all the changes.[36]

The proposed ESPIG program has paid close attention to lessons learnt and taken them into consideration in its design. The GA has taken specific measures to strengthen implementation capacity, including conducting a needs analysis at the country level to fill in any gaps prior to the start of implementation, recruiting a national Program Coordinator for each country and additional technical and administrative support to complement existing capacity within the EDMU. A procurement officer financed by the project will also help to ensure bulk procurement of goods and services across components wherever possible.

With regards to engaging relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries, the program is now supporting the participation of non-GPE Member States in the development of regional products such as the primary level curriculum and quality teaching frameworks, as well as data collection and reporting systems. Involving representatives from non-GPE Member States will help to increase ownership and uptake of products across the region, as it was previously noted that simply sharing outputs with non-GPE Member States was not effective to achieve the degree of harmonization desired. Ministries of Education will also consult more closely with all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries, particularly education officers, teachers and school leaders to ensure greater communication and adapt program roll-out accordingly. A

[34] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 13.
[35] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 14.
[36] World Bank (2020). Implementation Completion and Results Report - TF0A2937, page 38-40.

sustainability framework will also help to ensure gains from the initiative can be reached and are not lost once the program comes to an end. The framework incorporates elements of human resource management- ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged along the way; change and transition management- including advocacy and support; as well as financial management- to ensure relevant costs can be integrated into national budgets.

### 2.2 ESPIG DESCRIPTION

The requested grant amount of USD$ 10,000,000 is within the approved combined Maximum Country Allocation, which consists of USD$ 2.5 million from each of the four GPE Member States.

The program was developed to address some of the outstanding education challenges in the region and will support the implementation of the OESS 5-year implementation plan. Its over-arching objective is to improve learning outcomes and enhance equity of access to quality education services at the basic education cycle. The proposed activities strongly align with GPE's 3 strategic goals and are organized around four components. The main activities and expected outcomes are provided below.

1. Enhanced quality and equity of access to ECD and Special Education Needs (SEN) Services: This component aims to expand and improve pre-primary learning facilities by refurbishing and equipping underutilized spaces in primary schools to create pre-primary classrooms, developing a professional development program for ECE and conducting in-service training in child-center learning. The component also aims to improve services for SEN learners by conducting a national needs assessment on and developing an action plan to address any gaps; developing and providing professional training to teachers and practitioners who interact with children with SEN; supporting the incorporation of assistive tools for SEN in select education institutions; and undertaking a community awareness program on SEN.

2. Enhanced Curriculum and Assessment: This component aims to improve student success by implementing an enhanced primary school curriculum and strengthening teachers' capacity to deliver and assess it. This component builds on the need to modernize and harmonize a regional OECS curriculum, last reviewed in 2005. The program will first build local capacity for curriculum development by developing a course and training Curriculum and Education Officers in all nine OECS Member States. It will also conduct an evaluation of the existing curriculum and elaborate a roadmap for its development. This assessment and development will include a clear gender component considering the disparities observed, particularly for boys. Curriculum development will begin in year 2 with each Member State responsible for a different core subject and will include consultations with key stakeholders, expert review of

draft documents, and digitization of the curriculum once complete. The program will also support the development and procurement of curriculum support materials, a repository of materials, and a one-year pilot of the curriculum in select schools. Lastly, the program will revise the early grade reading assessment and develop a similar one for mathematics to ensure comparability across Member States, as well as conduct a pilot and round of assessments.

3. Strengthened Leadership and Management: This component aims to improve quality and accountability of leadership and management, building on activities of the previous GPE-funded program, and devolving greater decision-making powers to schools through a school development planning process. Activities include the development of a Quality Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Framework to guide school leaders in their roles and responsibilities; continuous professional development for school leaders focused on school development planning and curriculum enhancement, which includes a mentoring component; and development and implementation of a harmonized continuous school improvement model, including monitoring and evaluation.

4. Program Management, Institutional Strengthening, Monitoring and Evaluation: This component aims to strengthen the capacity of the education system for program management, monitoring and evaluation, and communication with key stakeholders at regional and national levels. In addition to covering implementation support costs, this component will also develop a classroom observation tool, establish an automated education data system for providing regular information on student progress and related factors, and strengthen institutional capacity for its use. The MERL system, as it is known, will facilitate the collection of real-time data on teaching and learning to guide improvements at the school level and policy-making decisions. The program also aims to implement a regional and national change management strategy to support the implementation and sustainability of OESS initiatives.

### 2.2.1 Regional public goods and support to non-GPE Member States

In an effort to promote harmonization and integration across the region, the ESPIG will support the participation of all OECS Member States, both GPE and non-GPE, in the development of certain regional products. This approach is consistent with GPE's Regional ESPIG guidelines, which permits GPE Member States to consolidate their MCAs to support implementation of a regional ESP and to include countries that may not be eligible for GPE resources[37]. A key lesson

[37] According to GPE's Regional ESPIG guidelines, "SIDS can consolidate their MCAs into a total allocation to support the implementation of a regional ESP. This would include countries that may not be eligible for GPE resources. However, the regional ESP should make clear that resources and support will be fairly targeted towards those

learnt from the previous ESPIG and Mid-Term Review of the OESS is that all stakeholders must be involved in the development of regional public goods to ensure ownership across all Member States and uptake across the region.[38] For this reason, the proposed ESPIG will involve representatives of non-GPE Member States to adequately reflect their voices and perspectives in the final product.

The table below shows the different activities in the grant and highlights which activities include the participation of the five non-GPE Member States, as well as the funding amounts that will support their participation. Overall, US$ 843,190 or 8% of the grant amount will be used to support the participation of non-GPE Member States. These activities include a regional survey on special education, the development of a new harmonized curriculum and supporting materials, the development of early grade assessments for reading and numeracy, and participation at program review meetings. For all other activities, the EDMU will assist in mobilizing additional resources to support their implementation in non-GPE Member States.

**Table A: ESPIG Activities by beneficiary**

| Activities and amount (US$) | GPE Member States (4) | Non-GPE Member States (5) | Regional |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ECD** – refurbish classrooms, teacher training | 1,189,150 | - | - |
| **Special Education** – disability survey | 98,950 | 7,250 | - |
| **Special Education** – teacher training, materials, awareness | 584,120 | - | - |
| **New Curriculum** – evaluation, development, support materials. | 975,051 | 149,340 | - |
| **New Curriculum** – pilot | 823,480 | - | - |
| **Reading assessment** – revise, pilot, administer | 296,440 | 323,050 | - |
| **Numeracy assessment** – develop, pilot, administer | 296,440 | 323,050 | - |
| **School leadership** – framework, training | 802,700 | - | - |
| **School improvement model** – develop, implement | 889,295 | - | - |
| **Program management** – national, regional | 856,343 | - | 1,052,187 |
| **Program management** – review meetings, progress reports, evaluations | 289,260 | 40,500 | - |
| **M&E and ESPIG monitoring** – training | 59,740 | - | - |

countries in the region that are least developed (poverty criteria), have lower education results (education vulnerability) and are in situations of fragility" (pg.3).

[38] OECS (2020). OECS Education Support Program – Program Document, page 15

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EMIS and classroom observation tool** – develop, implement | 572,154 | - | - |
| **Change management** | 371,500 | - | - |
| **Total by beneficiary and percentage** | **8,104,623 (81%)** | **843,190 (8%)** | **1,052,187 (11%)** |
| **Total** | **10,000,000 (100%)** | | |

### 2.2.2 Program management and implementation arrangements

A project modality was selected for the program due to the regional nature of the grant and the fact that national budgeting cycles do not align across Member States. This decision was made by consensus ahead of the selection of the Grant Agent, in September 2019. Due to the nature of a regional submission, the traditional analysis on alignment with national systems was not conducted for this review. Nevertheless, the program is fully aligned with regional systems and seeks alignment with national systems as much as possible.

This is the first ESPIG for which the OECS will be a GA. The OECS was approved as a GA in February 2020, through the accreditation process that further strengthened regional systems that will be used for implementation of the ESPIG. It is important to note that the subsequent transfer of funds to the GA is contingent on progress in addressing the findings of the institutional capacity assessment. There are three pending actions within the OECS institutional strengthening action plan due between June 2021 and June 2022. Two priority actions from the Strengthening Action Plan were completed in March 2021, namely: The implementation of mechanisms for the public to report to OECS any case of misuse of funds or any case of sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH). These two actions were completed in line with the timeline proposed in the action plan. The Secretariat will continue to monitor progress of the pending actions within the OECS institutional strengthening action plan.

In terms of implementation arrangements, the OECS Commission will lead the implementation of regional level activities through the Grants Management Office and the Education Development Management Unit. Implementation at the national level will leverage established national systems in the 4 GPE Member States, with technical and fiduciary aspects managed by the Planning Units within the Ministry of Education with support from the Ministry of Finance. National teams will be established in each of the 4 countries, led by a dedicated Project Manager based within the Ministry, who will be a link to the regional level as well as local stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The GA's implementation support costs are clearly articulated within the program budget and in line with project requirements, past lessons learnt, and areas of opportunity highlighted under the GA review. At the regional level, support costs will cover a project manager, two technical specialists, a procurement officer, administrative support and equipment for the program (US$ 1,007,187). These elements will strengthen the project's implementation capacity and support smooth and timely implementation. At the national level, the program will cover the costs of a National Project Coordinator in each of the 4 countries as well as administrative support and equipment. Country operational costs add up to US$ 214,000 per country, or US$ 856,000 total.

Taken together, program management costs are high at US$1.8 million, especially when considering an agency fee of 7%. Nevertheless, these costs were carefully considered and deemed justified in this context. Upon the Secretariat's request, the GA provided a detailed breakdown and description of its direct and indirect costs for program implementation. The Secretariat carefully examined costs to ensure there was no duplication between the agency fee and program management costs, or between regional and national level expenditures. The Secretariat found that the agency fee already incorporated costs that are often classified as direct costs in other grants, and that staffing positions requested at the regional and national level (such as procurement, accounting, administration support) and level of effort required were evidence-based and without duplication. Given that each of the 4 GPE countries in the ESPIG have different national systems for procurement and accounting, different budget cycles, different policies at different levels of implementation, there is a high transaction cost in working with and coordinating across all four countries. Lessons learnt from previous programs, where implementation was stalled due to lack of capacity, has informed the GA's estimations of effort required to implement the proposed ESPIG successfully.

Given that funds will support regional systems and products within a regional plan for which the GA has an institutional mandate to lead and coordinate implementation, the Secretariat has taken due care to consider the nature of regional activities to ensure costs are justified and grant funds bring maximum benefit to the most vulnerable children in the 4 GPE Member States. The GA will be requested to obtain prior approval from the Secretariat for any reallocation of funds away from the national level to the regional level.

**Table B: ESPIG Components and Costs**

| | GPE Financing US$ | % of total GPE |
|---|---|---|
| **Total MCA** | 10 Million | 100% |
| **Fixed Part** | | |
| **Program Component*** | | |
| **Component 1:** Enhanced quality and equity of access to ECD and special education needs (SEN) services | **1,879,470** | **18.8%** |
| **1.1:** Early Childhood Education | 1,189,150 | 11.9% |
| **1.2:** Improved availability of services for vulnerable children with Special Education Needs (SEN) | 690,320 | 6.9% |
| **Component 2:** Curriculum and Assessment | **3,186,851** | **31.9%** |
| **2.1:** Improved capacity to develop and implement school curriculum | 314,000 | 3.1% |
| **2.2:** More Relevant OECS Harmonized Primary Curriculum (OHPC) and Standard Key Stage Assessment | 1,633,871 | 16.3% |
| **2.3:** Improved Key Stage Assessment in Reading and Mathematics | 1,238,980 | 12.4% |
| **Component 3:** Strengthened Leadership and Management | **1,691,995** | **16.9%** |
| **3.1:** Enhanced Capacity of Education Leaders to Support Learning | 802,700 | 8.0% |
| **3.2:** Strengthened School Improvement Planning and Implementation | 853,295 | 8.5% |
| **3.3:** Communication | 36,000 | 0.4% |
| **Component 4:** Program Management; Teaching and learning data systems and tools; Monitoring and Evaluation | ***3,241,683*** | **32.4%** |
| **4.1:** Program Management<br>*Including Grant Agent's implementation support costs of 1,007,187 (10% of total budget).* | *1,863,530* | 18.6% |
| **4.2:** ESPIG Monitoring and Evaluation | *374,760* | 3.7% |
| **4.3:** Training on monitoring and learning framework, teaching and learning data system, classroom observation tool | *1,003,394* | 10.0% |
| **GRAND TOTAL** (with Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs) | ***10,000,000*** | **100%** |
| **Agency Fees**** | 700,000 | 7% |

* Percentages may not add due to rounding

** Agency Fee is not included in the MCA and is calculated as percentage rate (agreed with each GA) from the total.

## 3 RECOMMENDED DECISION

Given the context of the Caribbean region, the Secretariat finds that the proposed grant application is relevant in the region's context and well-aligned with the regional sector plan and implementation plan. The Secretariat considers that the three funding model requirements are met and recommends the approval of the regional ESPIG.

**The proposal is recommended to the CEO to approve with the following Observations, Report Backs, and/or Conditions:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Observation** | • The Secretariat would like to commend the OECS Commission, the Member States, and all the partners for developing a strong regional program with a clear vision and direction for both the regional and national level. The effort, reflection, and collaboration between the regional body and Member States is particularly recognized. |
| **Report-back** | • Report-back on annual figures of domestic financing for the education sector as data becomes available.<br>• Report-back on all baselines and targets in the Results Framework in the first annual report.<br>• Report-back on the targeting criteria that will be used to select vulnerable communities that will benefit from refurbished ECD classrooms in the first annual report. |
| **Condition** | • Transfer of funds are conditional on OECS satisfactorily addressing outstanding actions stemming from the accreditation process, captured within the institutional strengthening action plan.<br>• Secretariat prior approval is required for any re-allocation of grant funds from the national level to the regional level. |