SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND RISK COMMITTEE

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE	FRC/2021/09 DOC 04	FOR DECISION

EDUCATION OUT LOUD TOP UP FINANCING FOR OC1: NATIONAL EDUCATION COALITIONS

Please note: Documents are deliberative in nature and, in accordance with the GPE Transparency Policy, are considered to be public documents only after their appraisal by the relevant governance instance. It is understood that members will circulate documents among their constituency members prior to consideration for consultation purposes, with the exception of documents that are confidential.

Key issues for consideration:

- The Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC) was requested to review the findings from the rapid review of Education Out Loud Operational Component 1 (OC1) and the proposal for top up funding submitted by Oxfam IBIS. Overall, PILC confirmed that the top up proposal for OC1 is consistent with the findings and recommendations from the Education Out Loud (EOL) rapid review, and that the top up proposal reflects sufficient adaptations to maximize the potential contributions of OC1 to GPE Strategy 2025.
- PILC welcomed the Grant Agent's proposals for (i) adjustments to the EOL monitoring, evaluation and learning, and results frameworks and (ii) engagement of GPE country leads to foster increased participation of National Education Coalitions in policy dialogue by clarifying roles and having joint planning exercises for capacity building, support and advocacy with the Global Campaign for Education and its Regional Coalitions.
- Committee members underlined the need for GPE/EOL to sensitize National Education Coalitions to the new operating model. They encouraged the proposal to incorporate Recommendation 3 regarding linking EOL activities with the rest of GPE and other development partners, in order to build synergies, thus improving policy design, learning, monitoring and accountability.
- Finally, PILC emphasized the need for further discussion of the rapid review findings and follow up actions, including a clear action plan for implementation, and robust evaluation mechanisms to demonstrate the results of the investments.

Objective

1. This document sets out necessary information for the Finance and Risk Committee to make a decision on the top up financing proposal for Operational Component 1 of Education Out Loud from the grant agent Oxfam IBIS.

Recommended decision

FRC/2021/09-XX—Education Out Loud: The Finance and Risk Committee in its delegated authority from the Board of Directors (BOD/2021/05-04):

1. Approves the top up proposal to the Education Out Loud grant as summarized in Annex A, which includes an incremental allocation from GPE Trust Funds of US$17,350,025 (inclusive of agency fees of US$ 1,135,048) to Oxfam IBIS as Grant Agent of Education Out Loud.

Background and overview

2. Education Out Loud (EOL) supports civil society to participate in shaping education policy to better meet the needs of communities, especially of vulnerable and marginalized populations.
3. In March 2019, the Board approved $55.5 million for Advocacy and Social Accountability (later rebranded as Education Out Loud) for the 2019-2024 implementation period (BOD/2019/03-02). EOL has three main components, among which Operational Component 1 (OC1) provides support to the operations and activities of 54 National Education Coalitions (NECs) for the 2019-2021 period.
4. In May 2021, the Board delegated authority to the Finance and Risk Committee (BOD/2021/05-04) to approve a proposal from Oxfam IBIS to top up funding for OC1 in order to extend activities for two more years, thereby aligning OC1 with the implementation period of the other Education Out Loud grants.
5. To inform the Board's consideration of continuing financing for OC1, the Secretariat commissioned a rapid review of OC1 progress and emerging evidence of impact. This was shared with the Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC) to enable their input on the relevance of the top up proposal for Education Out Loud. Feedback from PILC has been summarized in the key issues section of this paper.
6. The Secretariat also undertook a quality assurance review of the proposal from Oxfam IBIS, using an assessment framework to analyse the programmatic, budget, risk management, implementation and monitoring, evaluation and learning elements of the proposal. The Secretariat finds that the quality of the proposal is satisfactory. It is consistent with the original proposal approved in 2019, addresses the rapid review recommendations and provides a valuable contribution to the GPE 2025 Strategy. Based on its review, the Secretariat recommends that the proposal be approved.

Annex A Summary of the Top-up Financing Proposal from Oxfam IBIS
Annex B Summary of Education Out Loud OC1 Rapid Review and Response

Additional documents (e.g. original and full top up proposal, OC1 rapid review) are posted on the Governance Portal.

Annex A - Summary of the Top-up Financing Proposal from Oxfam IBIS

1.0 Introduction & Rationale for top up funding

In March 2019, the GPE Board confirmed Oxfam IBIS as the grant agent for the Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA) fund – later rebranded as Education Out Loud - and approved their proposal. It offered a continuation of GPE support to National Education Coalitions (NECs), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and its Regional Coalitions (RCs) since 2009 through the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF). While NECs are supported through Operational Component 1 (OC1) of Education Out Loud for the period 2020-2021, GPE's support to civil society has also expanded to include national accountability organizations (OC2) and transnational advocacy alliances (OC3) for the period 2020-2023 (with end of program in 2024).

The proposal for top up financing to extend OC1 for two years builds on and proposes to continue efforts underway by NECs in the current program. The rationale for this extension includes four primary motivations. First, the experience of the present grant agent in its oversight of NEC support in 2020-21 and the Rapid Review of OC1 confirms the relevance and effectiveness of using the coalition modality to support civil society efforts to promote education advocacy. Second, the top up will allow NECs to remain part of Education Out Loud for two additional years and would ensure that grantees from OC2 and OC3 can work with them to leverage NEC's access to the sector policy dialogue and overall policy processes under an aligned timeline for implementation. Third, NECS have made significant advocacy gains that could be further consolidated through continued engagement.

Finally, the rationale to continue to support NECs is further enhanced by the adoption of the new GPE 2025 strategic plan, which relies heavily on country level inclusive sector dialogue and civil society participation. For change at system level to be achieved, nation-wide alignment of stakeholders including parents, teachers, communities and civil society groups is seen as a key enabling factor. GPE's operating model acknowledges this and expects governments to work with civil society, which is made more feasible through the active engagement of NECs in sector dialogue.

2.0 State of implementation

In August 2019, 56 eligible NECs were invited to submit proposals for OC1 funding for education policy advocacy, along with GCE and the four regional coalitions to support NECs as learning partners. After review of the proposals by Regional Independent Selection Panels (RISPs) and an extensive due diligence assessment, 54 NECs, as well as GCE and 3 RCs (ACEA, ASPBAE and CLADE), began implementation in 2020.

2.1 Impact of the pandemic

Education Out Loud efforts faced challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic just as OC1 implementation efforts began in early 2020. The grant agent supported grantees to apply adaptive management measures in order to revise activities and timelines which were designed and assessed well before the arrival of the pandemic. This also provided an opportunity to review and often change well-established approaches as the situation has clearly called for crisis management and innovation. Across a wide number of countries, lockdowns and the associated limitations on conventional public policy advocacy activities have led grantees to explore opportunities to move education advocacy into virtual spaces. The OC1 Rapid Review has strongly appreciated its adaptive management approaches. Yet the challenges of the global health emergency still hamper civil society advocacy and there is a need to continually rethink the approach to and strategies for implementing activities. An extension will help grantees analyse and address the continuing challenges.

2.2 Implementation progress

Education Out Loud support has made it possible for NECs to be consistently active in policy discussion arenas where they can keep abreast of new policies and support the formulation of inclusive education policies. NECs have in many cases either participated in discussion of policy changes to promote the right to education of marginalised groups and/or they have directly advocated for these policy changes. In 2020, NECs participated in LEG meetings in 41 countries. In the second half of 2020 when policy discussions were often carried out in virtual spaces, NECs participated in LEG meetings in 37 countries. Through their participation, NECs have presented arguments, data, and technical assistance to promote human rights-based approaches and inclusion of marginalised groups. NECs have contributed to at least one such public policy, law, directive, guideline etc. in at least 23 countries.

2.3 Capacity and learning support

Education Out Loud has also supported NECs capacity through the development of learning plans and skill-building approaches. Fifty-one out of 54 NECs have developed or improved their learning plans and are receiving support from a network of learning partners. The NECs have increased capacities and skills in various areas (governance, technical, and advocacy skills) through their participation in formal trainings, on-line webinars, one-to-one trainings, and other training methodologies.

3.0 Adaptations based on implementation experience and rapid review

The proposed top up funding proposal provides an opportunity to align Education Out Loud with GPE 2025 and build on the recommendations from the OC1 rapid review. Education Out Loud has been designed on the backdrop of the GPE 2020 strategy for the

wider implementation efforts, and the proposed top up now provides an opportunity for stronger alignment with GPE 2025. Proposals developed by the GPE Secretariat and Grant Agent include building capacity and skills of the grantees on Strategy 2025 and the new operating model, including additional support to CSOs to provide evidence to inform dialogue related to operating model enabling factors and prioritization of investments in the Partnership Compact. Supporting cross-country learning exchange of grantees through the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange or other learning and capacity development opportunities may also be beneficial. Grantees will also benefit from enhanced support to play a more effective role in monitoring, learning and adaptation.

Based on the Rapid Review, Oxfam IBIS will also put in place the adaptations to further strengthen program implementation, including strengthening linkages between OC1, OC2, and OC3; strengthening collaboration between Education Out Loud program staff and GPE Secretariat staff for more strategic country level cooperation; improving the present monitoring and reporting system; drawing more on untapped assets of RISPs; clarifying roles and division of labor between Oxfam IBIS, regional management units, GCE and the regional coalitions; and ensuring more regular joint planning with GCE and Regional Coalitions to collaborate and coordinate capacity building, learning partner support, and advocacy agendas. The Grant Agent response to recommendations in the Rapid Review is included in **Annex B**. In addition, further opportunities to operationalize the Rapid Review recommendations will be explored through additional workshops with grantees later this year, which will garner additional adaptations in the collaborative work of Education Out Loud stakeholders.

4.0 Coverage, activities and approaches in the OC1 extension period

Established and operational NECs in countries which are eligible for GPE funding and are actively seeking to become a GPE partner will be eligible to apply for Education Out Loud support. The proposal submission, review and approval process will be initiated as soon as the decision has been made by the designated GPE Board Committee on the top up proposal to ensure there is no discontinuity of funding. OC1 will continue to support national coalitions to improve their core functions. Applications from coalitions should identify how they will ensure relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability in civil society participation in education policy processes. Grants will continue to fall in the USD 100,000-300,000 range, with a more flexible approach to allow differentiated financial and technical support to NECs at different ends of the capacity spectrum.

5.0 Adaptations to monitoring, evaluation and results framework

No major changes in the monitoring and evaluation system are envisioned, though reporting will be streamlined based on the Rapid Review recommendation. However, two changes are recommended in the Education Out Loud Global Results framework. First, in order to allow for better alignment with the first GPE 2025 Country level objective and

place greater emphasis on gender, the **bold** language will be added to Specific Objective 1: *"Strengthen national civil society engagement in **gender responsive** education planning, policy **development** and monitoring".*

Secondly, while the four OC1 outcomes are already well aligned with GPE 2025, a fifth outcome is proposed, which would allow aligning OC1 with the wider call for systems transformation embraced by GPE 2025: "*Outcome 1.5: National education coalitions are active in monitoring and accountability mechanisms of public national education to ensure the delivery of transformative policies and programs that accelerate access, learning outcomes, and gender equality, leaving no one behind'.*

6.0 Budget overview

Overall, the proposed budget follows the same approach and standards as in the approved Education Out Loud grant. The top up budget is consistent with the trends in utilization.

Summary budget table

Description	Original budget (US$)	Top up budget (US$)	Revised budget (US$)
OC1: Support for National Coalitions	16,899,368	14,643,640	**31,543,008**
OC2: Social Accountability	13,128,000	-	**13,128,000**
OC3: Transnational Advocacy	13,043,000	-	**13,043,000**
Direct Program management/ supervision costs	8,528,271	1,571,337	**10,099,608**
Agency *fees*	3,900,000	1,135,048	**5,035,048**
TOTAL	**55,498,639**	**17,350,025**	**72,848,664**

Annex B: Summary of Eduation Out Loud OC1 Rapid Review and Response

1. Introduction and Methodology

The rapid review focused on answering questions related to the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of Education Out Loud's Operational Component 1. The review covers the period from Education Out Loud's conception as Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA) in the Design Blueprint (June 2018) until the present (June 2021). Ten review questions are organized into three main rapid review questions (MRQs) which relate to the past development, current implementation, and outlook of OC1.

- **MRQ1.** To what extent is Education Out Loud OC1 relevant, appropriate, and aligned with GPE2020 thus far and GPE 2025 moving forward?
- **MRQ2.** How efficient are existing processes and available resources in implementing OC1?
- **MRQ3.** Is Education Out Loud OC1 achieving its intended outcomes and, ultimately, objectives?

The full Rapid Review report is available at the Governance Portal. A summary of the 12 conclusions, 16 recommendations, and Grant Agent response to the recommendations is included below.

2. Findings

Conclusion 1. The strategic design of Education Out Loud OC1 is logical, informed by evidence and Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), and relevant to national education coalitions in GPE partner countries. While OC1 critically fills a gap of vertically integrated support of civil society in the education sector, how Education Out Loud will link activities and with other development partners is not yet clear. OC1's strategy is ambitious and well informed by evidence on what works to strengthen civil society engagement. OC1's activities are very relevant to the overall goal of supporting the capacity of civil society to strengthen their engagement in the education sector. However, the ambition and relevance of OC1's design is hindered somewhat by the lack of articulation of how OC1 will be linked to OC2 and OC3. OC1 fills an important gap in the sector, as few other donors are engaged in education accountability, and GPE's prominence as a global actor is well leveraged.

Conclusion 2. OC1's original strategic design is closely aligned and relevant to the GPE2020 strategy, directly contributing to the achievement of GPE's objective to support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring in partner countries. However, while relevant in most country contexts, implementation relevance varies according to the strength of NECs. Education Out Loud in its design seeks to contribute to many of GPE2020's strategic objectives – education sector planning, implementation, financing, and monitoring – but most clearly and substantively

contributes to the strategic objective on supporting civil society and mutual accountability. The program is also relevant to GPE's existing country level operational model and other global programs.

Conclusion 3. While OC1's strategic design is highly relevant, this lessens somewhat in implementation due to varying levels of awareness of GPE objectives among NECs and coordination timing challenges between OCs. Despite this, OC1's focus on institutional capacity building is perceived as relevant to local contexts by most NECs sampled. This is especially true for nascent, weaker NECs. However, OC1's relevance varies for a few NECs, such as those more established NECs or those in FCA contexts.

Conclusion 4. OC1 is well placed to be both relevant and crucial to the realization of GPE2025's future focus on transformational change, country ownerships, and gender and social inclusion. Though Education Out Loud and OC1 were designed prior to the development of GPE2025, they appear to be well aligned to GPE2025's strategic vision and objectives. This is especially the case regarding promoting an aligned domestic sector in support of transformational change.

Conclusion 5. The Grant Agent is perceived to have instituted rigorous and thorough due diligence protocols to ensure the adequate stewardship of resources in OC1 thus far.

Conclusion 6. OC1's initial start-up and application process for national education coalitions is said to be intensive and thorough but sometimes inefficient and overly rushed. This, along with the significant variation in the quality of NEC applications, limited the ability of global/regional stakeholders to plan for implementation.

Conclusion 7. The independent selection panels are an effective mechanism to support the quality of NEC applications at the start of OC1. In contrast, the Year Zero process has not fulfilled its design as an incubator for innovation testing and strategy development in NECs, due to limitations of many NEC applications.

Conclusion 8. Efficient governance of OC1 is hampered by confusion across stakeholders on expectations, roles, and responsibilities. There is also a lack of distinction in capacity and roles of actors, especially regional coalitions.

Conclusion 9. Regional management units, and their adaptive management, are an integral component of Education Out Loud management and strengthen Education Out Loud's support of NECs. However, the bottom-up approach and NEC-level reporting can be inefficient.

Conclusion 10. Despite significant challenges of Covid 19 disruptions and shrinking civic spaces, overall OC1 is on track to achieve its expected results at the intended outcomes and objective levels and is continuing to contribute to GPE's strategic objective of supporting civil society and policy dialogue. Overall OC1 appears on track to achieve its objective of strengthening national civil society engagement in education planning,

policy dialogue and monitoring. Success thus far is in part due to productive adaptive management by RMUs, Oxfam IBIS' building on the strengths of CSEF, and the focus on the individual needs of NECs.

Conclusion 11. Education Out Loud provides substantial support for NEC-level learning. However, there is a lack of progress on a systematic synthesis and dissemination of high-level lessons learned on what works in education sector accountability.

Conclusion 12. Education Out Loud has promoted co-financing efforts of NECs beyond GPE by proving financial sustainability trainings and informal capacity building in financial and governance management.

3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Review the full Education Out Loud Theory of Change to clearly theorize the connection and reinforcing mechanisms between the Operational Components for planning and implementation. **Response:** *As this goes beyond the scope of OC1, it will be addressed by the soon to be commissioned Mid-Term Review of Education Out Loud.*

Recommendation 2. Conduct a stakeholder mapping of relevant government, development partners, and civil society actors in each GPE partner country to identify opportunities and challenges to partnership. This activity could be conducted by the NEC themselves with the support of RMUs. **Response:** *A sequenced approach will be taken to roll out this exercise during the top up extension period.*

Recommendation 3. Continue OC1's focus on supporting mutual accountability and identify additional opportunities to better connect Education Out Loud with GPE's country-level operational model and other global programs. **Response:** *To further enhance EOL relevance at country level in light of GPE 2025, the Grant Agent will work with GPE Secretariat to identify opportunities for NECs to become more systematically involved, both in upstream policy design efforts and downstream monitoring and accountability efforts. Grantees will be supported to provide evidence to inform dialogue related to operating model enabling factors and prioritization of investments in the Partnership Compact. EOL will offer training to grantees to support data analysis and presentation as well as accompaniment and mentoring by Learning Partners. Supporting cross-country learning exchange through KIX or other learning opportunities will also be beneficial.*

Recommendation 4. Develop different capacity building approaches and learning plans for three cohorts of NECs: more established and capacitated NECs; nascent NECs; and NECs operating in FCAS and severely constrained contexts. **Response:** *Within the learning framework of the original approved proposal, the grant agent will adopt a customised approach based on capacity assessments of individual NECs as well as applicant track*

records during the 2020-21 funding cycle regarding project implementation and grant reporting criteria.

Recommendation 5. Emphasize in GPE Secretariat and with GPE country partners that NECs are not solely grantees in Education Out Loud but critical actors already engaging in domestic policy spaces. Education Out Loud should identify and provide additional capacity building opportunities for NECs that respond to national needs identified in GPE tools that support NEC participation in policy dialogue. **Response**: *Building on the imperative provided in the GPE 2025 operating model, which emphasizes increased reliance on country level CSO participation in issues such as domestic resource mobilization, data, and implementation monitoring, CSO efforts in these strategic areas will be supported through enhanced capacity support.*

Recommendation 6. GPE Secretariat should conduct a series of workshops with Education Out Loud, NECs and other CSOs to bring all stakeholders on board to the new operating model, explain the shift to GPE2025 and articulate its logic, and highlight NECs crucial role in new ways of working to empower the presence of CSOs in policy dialogue. ***Response:*** *Through development and support through EOL, NEC roles would be strengthened in the top up period to include:*

a. *Monitoring education finance and expenditure where there are challenges around the key enabling factors in terms of volume, equity, efficiency, or lack of transparency in the use of finance.*
b. *Providing additional assessments of grant implementation progress to complement those provided by governments and grant agents.*
c. *Holding partners accountable for their role in systems transformation, and push for alignment.*
d. *Providing input into citizen engagement mechanisms - where they exist.*

Recommendation 7. Continue the existing due diligence assessments through regular reporting. Identify how existing financial controls can be formalized into learning opportunities, for example through the development of manuals and identification of best practices for Education Out Loud -supported NECs. **Response:** *Due diligence assessments for grantees will be updated in early 2022.*

Recommendation 8. For future phases with NECs that are already funded by Education Out Loud, institute a lighter-touch application process that prioritizes strategy and the unique nature of advocacy programming. **Response:** *All NECs applying for EOL OC1 funds should be subject to the same criteria and standards, but the reporting requirements will be reviewed to be optimized.*

Recommendation 9. Survey all Independent Selection Panel (ISP) members to determine the appetite and preferences for wider engagement beyond solely reviewing grant applications but also engaging in a 'critical friend' role. **Response:** *The grant agent will address this recommendation while maintaining the distance between EOL operational implementation efforts and ISP members offering external assessments and advice as their prospective monitoring role is explored.*

Recommendation 10. Conduct discussions with Education Out Loud and GPE Secretariat, and request feedback from those NECs that did and did not participate in Year Zero to determine the following: 1) the purpose of Year Zero, 2) what worked well and did not work well and 3) coverage of Year Zero. **Response**: *The Rapid Review report pointed to mixed experience of working with Year Zero as part of OC1. In this light, Year Zero will not be a support modality to be included in the top up extension phase. Effort to assess the value of Year Zero and possible changes to its configuration would be part of the mid-term review exercise.*

Recommendation 11. Conduct participatory consultative process with all stakeholders on what responsibilities should sit with which stakeholder according to each specific region, the capacity of actors, and the desires of NECs in order to develop living, regional-specific RACI matrices based on the comparative advantage of each stakeholder. **Response:** *The Rapid Review has recommended improvements to roles and division of labour regarding learning efforts undertaken by GCE/RC and other learning partners. Oxfam IBIS will put in place a more effective strategic framework for EOL learning efforts to guide and coordinate the network of EOL learning partners. This will include more regular joint planning meetings to share plans for capacity building, learning partner support, and advocacy agendas.*

Recommendation 12. GPE Secretariat and GCE should commission a small formative review to explore the role of Education Out Loud in GCE's wider movement building and identify opportunities to take advantage of GCE's new opportunity as a flexible leader in advocacy, instead of grant management. **Response:** *This recommendation will be further explored and discussed with GCE.*

Recommendation 13. GMU and RMU should review reporting requirements and frameworks to create a lighter, swifter process for both RMUs and NECs. **Response:** *The grant agent will undertake amendments to the present system to make grantee reporting smoother and simpler while putting a higher emphasis on grantee reflections and lessons learned. Oxfam IBIS will also organize an annual reflection meeting to capture learnings.*

Recommendation 14. Continue the funding and support of OC1 implementation as well as begin to develop nuanced approaches for greater impact. Facilitate training opportunities for higher-capacitated NECs in technical and advocacy areas, while

maintaining the focus on governance capacity building for nascent NECs and on specific topics for greater cross-regional and cross-OC coordination. **Response**: *When preparing their respective proposals for the next phase of OC1 support, NECs will be required to submit further details on their learning needs and plans, as part of assessments and decisions on funding. Learning efforts will be more specific and targeted and less focused on generic project management skills. Learning partners will also continue to provide support and mentorship to individual NECs.*

Recommendation 15. Develop a high-level learning agenda (across all OCs) that will complement the existing learning framework but also identify overarching learning strategy, objectives, and questions for Education Out Loud, GPE Secretariat and sector-wide learning by commissioning a global learning partner. **Response:** *Given the impact and logistical constraints of Covid-19 on OC1 project implementation, some aspects of the learning agenda are just beginning to take shape. In 2021, new learning collaboratives are being established promising gains by means of peer learning and opportunities for sharing experience across the different OCs in EOL. An extension to 2022-23 will ensure time to harvest anticipated benefits of the learning collaboratives.*

Recommendation 16. Continue the technical support for co-financing efforts by facilitating trainings and informal capacity building according to the capacity and engagement of the NEC, and request NECs to conduct a stakeholder mapping to identify potential donors, funders, or partners in applications. **Response:** *NEC financial sustainability has formed an integral part of learning efforts, despite major constraints to fundraising due to the COVID-19 crisis. Oxfam IBIS has worked with NECs by offering training in fundraising, financial management, and strategic planning as a basis for diversifying the funding base. However, this requires a longer-term effort and the grant agent will continue its effort in this field and emphasises the importance of NECs prioritising such efforts in the top up extension period.*