DECEMBER 6-7, 2022

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PARIS, FRANCE | BOD/2022/12 DOC 08 | FOR DECISION

KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION EXCHANGE: COSTED EXTENSION PROPOSAL

Please note: In accordance with the GPE Transparency Policy, documents are public only after their appraisal by the relevant governance instance. Governance officials may circulate documents to their constituency for consultation purposes, except for documents of a confidential nature..

Key issues for consideration:

- The Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC) confirms to the Board that the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) costed extension proposal responds to the findings and incorporate the recommendations presented in the mid-term review, builds on program learning and demand from partners, and aligns with the objectives of the GPE 2025 Strategic Plan. PILC further noted that a semi-annual progress update to PILC on KIX implementation, rather than an annual one, would enable PILC to monitor progress and learning more regularly.
- In addition, PILC highlighted the importance of KIX, particularly in generating evidence and facilitating knowledge exchange among partner countries. It underlined that knowledge exchange had flourished despite the pandemic, and futher engagements are currently being ramped up. PILC further emphasized that strong focus should be placed on country-level capacity building and addressing data challenges to support roll-out of the operating model. PILC further encouraged greater synergies on gender equity and inclusion, producing and using evidence in fragile and conflict contexts, and increased teacher trainnig.
- The Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) recommends that the Board approve an allocation of US$ 80,000,000 (inclusive of agency fees of US$5,233,644) for the costed extension. Considering GPE's financial position, the FRC requested that the proposal be subject to availability of funds and commitment of trust funds in annual installments.

Objective

1. The Board is requested to consider a joint recommendation from the Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC) and the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) relating to the costed extension proposal for Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX), including allocation of resources to finance the extension, through June 30, 2027.

Recommended decision

BOD/2022/12-XX—Knowledge and Innovation Exchange: The Board of Directors:

1. In accordance with BOD/2022/06-06, confirms that the costed extension proposal submitted by the International Development Research Centre, as grant agent, responds to the findings and incorporates the recommendations presented in the mid-term review, builds on

program learning and demand from partners, and aligns with the objectives of the GPE 2025 Strategic Plan.

2. Requests that a progress update on the implementation of Knowledge and Innovation Exchange be provided to the Performance, Impact and Learning Committee on a semi-annual basis.

3. Approves an allocation of $80,000,000 (inclusive of $5,233,644 in agency fees) from the GPE Trust Fund to International Development Research Centre as the grant agent for the extension of Knowledge and Innovation Exchange, subject to availability of funds and commitment of trust funds in annual installments.

Background and overview

2. The Board requested the grant agent for Knowledge and Innovation Exchange – the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) – to develop a costed extension proposal for consideration by the PILC and FRC and recommendation to the Board in December 2022 (BOD/2022/06-06).

3. The costed extension proposal is informed by the findings and recommendations of the external mid-term evaluation which was discussed by the PILC in April 2022 and considered by the Board in June 2022 (BOD/2022/06 DOC 10).

4. The current Knowledge and Innovation Exchange budget of $76.8 million is entirely allocated. This includes the original budget of $58.5 million and two increases. In December 2019, the Board approved a further $12 million to increase the portfolio of global grants (BOD/2019/12-07), with $720,000 provided by IDRC. In May 2021, the Board approved an increased allocation of $3 million in targeted funds from the LEGO Foundation (BOD/2021/05-03), with $180,000 in additional co-financing provided by IDRC.

5. The amount proposed for the extension is USD $80 million, subject to confirmation of availability of funds by the FRC. IDRC will provide co-financing of USD$8,062,016, raising the total amount to USD$88,062,016. IDRC have increased their funding contribution from 6% to 9.15%. Building on the experience with the LEGO Foundation, additional targeted financing for KIX may also be sought.

6. The Secretariat's assessment found that the costed extension proposal responds well to the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation, builds on program learning and demand from partner countries, and commits to strengthen the achievement of GPE2025. Ongoing attention should be given to how the proposed adaptations advance the Gender Equality ambitions of GPE2025 and the extent to which KIX helps inform national policy dialogues to be more informed by evidence. On this basis, the Secretariat recommends the proposal for Board approval.

Annex A: Proposal background and summary of Secretariat assessment. Additional documents (including the full costed extension proposal, Executive Summary, and GPE quality assurance review matrix) are posted on the Governance Portal.

Annex A: Proposal Background and summary of Secretariat Assessment

Context and Rationale

1. The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) was developed as a response to demand by partner countries for GPE to support exchange experience, evidence and learning on shared priorities to improve education access and quality (BOD/2019/03-02). Within three years of implementation, 70 partner countries are engaged in KIX, with fifty-five actively involved in regional hubs and applied research ongoing in fifty-three. Evidence demonstrates that KIX is generating results, supporting and strengthening evidence-informed policy dialogues and programs (2021-2022 Annual Report).
2. KIX is midway through its implementation period, which ends in June 2024. An external midterm evaluation conducted between November 2021 and March 2022 (Executive Summary of KIX MTR) noted that KIX had made 'significant progress, is valued by partner countries, and is well positioned for impact'. To increase and accelerate its impact, six recommendations for improvement were proposed: Leverage GPE's systems transformation work in partner countries; Strengthen links between the main components of the program; Provide differentiated support to countries according to engagement levels; Identify key roles to participate in the regional hubs; Simplify communication to motivate, engage, and align different stakeholders; and Refine the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) model.
3. Following the invitation by the GPE Board in June 2022 (Board meeting report. June 2022), IDRC developed a costed proposal for extending KIX through to 2027. The Secretariat assessed the proposal against its program quality standards, summarized in the following section.
4. As an input to the extension proposal, a comparator analysis of 15 donor and foundation-led knowledge initiatives was conducted in July and August 2022. Its purpose was to clarify KIX's value proposition, identify strategic partnership opportunities, and signpost possible adaptations. The study indicated interest from numerous partners in strategic collaborations with KIX and those bi-lateral and foundation partners interviewed – including FCDO, USAID, the Gates and the Aga Khan foundations – affirmed KIX's value proposition to include: global convening power and reach; strong, long-standing and deep relationships with government partners and civil society organizations; access to a huge range of already-existing evidence with the ability to synthesize for appropriate use; significant funding matched with the ability to nimbly respond to demand and opportunity; well-respected and appreciated; and focused on supporting researchers in the Global South. The study, while modest in scope, indicates that KIX occupies a unique space in the global education knowledge ecosystem and is recognized and appreciated by other initiatives for doing so.
5. The timeliness of the extension and its adaptations is noteworthy. The importance of evidence for policy dialogue is reflected by the growth of knowledge exchange initiatives led by several international organizations in the last three years. Moreover, COVID-19 has greatly

increased country demand for evidence to inform investments to recover learning losses and build resilient education systems, especially those that protect the most marginalized and hardest to reach, including girls, children with disabilities and those affected by conflicts, disasters, and displacement.

Summary of Secretariat Assessment

6. The Secretariat assessed the proposal against GPE policies and program standards, GPE 2025 priorities, the midterm evaluation recommendations, and June 2022 Board discussion, with the review matrix available on the Governance Portal. The proposal responds clearly to the recommendations of the midterm review, builds on program learning and demand from partners countries, and is well positioned to strengthen the achievement of GPE2025, alignment to which is clear and compelling.

7. In relation to the first two recommendations of the midterm review, the proposal aligns with and accompanies GPE2025, demonstrating the role of KIX in evidence-based policy making and partner countries' reform efforts, a deeper thematic focus, and enhanced attention to lessons from and implications for scaling reforms and to scaling innovations. The proposal foresees the use of a system lens/systems thinking as relevant in KIX research themes, knitting the work of Hubs and applied research grants more deliberately. It articulates how the Impact Pathway links to GPE2025 strategic objectives.

8. KIX builds on implementation lessons to solidly position itself vis-à-vis GPE's country-level work and national policy dialogues processes. It addresses the midterm review recommendations three and four by explaining the differentiated support it will offer for countries to engage in Hubs and places clear emphasis on developing links between those involved in hubs, local education groups – including civil society – and GPE-supported processes. In so doing, it highlights the demand it responds to, how its role fits with the operating model, and explains how the maturation of relationships among KIX participants enables it to now make stronger contributions to national level work. This will be further enhanced through the new instrument of country support for knowledge mobilization. The Secretariat notes the extension builds off the original design and offers two major adaptations: the provision of direct support to countries for evidence needs, and expanded options for applied research grants, including to individual countries.

9. Operationally, the costs and structures align with previous agreements and are considered appropriate for the adaptations. A revised communications and engagement approach is already underway to simplify messaging and target prioritized audiences, addressing the fifth recommendation of the midterm review.

10. Aligned with the overall adaptations, the Impact Pathway and associated Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation strategy is refined and simplified, responding the sixth recommendation of the midterm review. The proposal confirms to reduce the number of indicators on which the grantees are asked to report, to simplify the reporting process for

grantees and eliminate some of the monitoring tools used in the current program. This revised approach is not fully detailed in the proposal nor is the full results framework provided, which would include details relevant (e.g., assumptions, indicators, monitoring tools, and milestones) to comprehensively assess proposal responsiveness to this recommendation.

11. The proposal confirms several efforts to integrate a gender lens and promote gender equality, including to ensure "all projects will integrate gender-responsive or gender-transformative approaches" and to fund applied research for and about scaling in the area of gender equality and inclusion. The extended program will build on and utilize its existing gender equality and inclusion (GEI) toolkit to review GEI integration throughout project implementation as well as draw on the findings of a (not yet completed) knowledge synthesis on gender equality to inform future calls for proposals and support programmatic knowledge mobilization and capacity strengthening efforts. Integration of GEI across the project includes assessment of new potential grantees and their demonstration of and potential to contribute to gender equality goals. Proposal strengths and ambitions are positively noted yet the proposal is less clear on how specifically the updated program will contribute to regional and country policy dialogue on gender equality (or dialogue across hubs) and to provide illustrations of gender-related action research grants.

12. The Secretariat recognizes the necessity for country support provided by KIX to complement other GPE assets, namely Strategic Capabilities and System Capacity Grants. It recognizes the KIX offer is relatively modest in funding per country and explicitly focused on knowledge exchange, evidence synthesis to inform policy needs, implementation research on reform agendas, and capacity building to incorporate evidence and research. This is distinct from Strategic Capabilities that focuses on reinforcing government capacity around education and cross-sectoral challenges for systems transformation, and System Capacity Grants that support capacity strengthening, especially with regard to enabling factors. The KIX offer appears a useful addition to the suite of GPE assets that partner countries may draw on, while simultaneously driving the objectives of GPE2025. Ongoing coordination with other GPE assets will be required to mitigate potential duplications.

13. The Secretariat considers the activities of the costed-extension program proposal responsive to the midterm review and Board expectations and guidance. The proposal is strategic, responsive to country demand, and timely. Together with the positive stance towards it demonstrated by peer knowledge initiatives led by global partners, it holds significant promise to help countries drive system transformation.

Observations / Next Steps

14. During startup of the costed extension program, the grant agent and Secretariat would further discuss operational details of KIX to contribute to regional and country policy dialogue

on gender equality (within the context of GPE2025) and more clearly scope terms of reference guiding gender-related action research grants.

15. The grant agent would provide the full results framework to the GPE Secretariat, inclusive of relevant narrative detailing relevant changes implemented to reduce the complexity and reporting burden on grantees within three months of start-up of the costed extension program.
16. The grant agent would complete an SEAH risk assessment for the KIX program and identify appropriate mitigation measures within three months of the effective start date of the costed extension program.
17. The proposal demonstrates the right direction of travel with EOL. The Secretariat would continue to attend this priority as a part of its ongoing engagement with the grant agent.
18. Alignment and complementarities between KIX country support, Strategic Capabilities and System Capacity Grants would be reviewed by the Secretariat on an ongoing, country-by-country basis.