JULY 18, 2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VIA AFFIRMATIVE VOTE | BOD/AV/2023/07 DOC 08 | FOR DECISION

ALLOCATION AND STRATEGIC PARAMETERS FOR A SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION GRANT TO THE MALDIVES

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 among their constituency members for consultation purposes, exception for documents of a confidential nature.

Objective

1 Consistent with the GPE 2025 operating model framework, this document sets out the allocation and strategic parameters for a system transformation grant to the Maldives, for Board decision.

Recommended Decision

BOD/AV/2023/07-XX – Allocation and Strategic Parameters for a System Transformation Grant to the Maldives: The Board of Directors:

1 Notes the assessment of the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) on enabling factors for system transformation in the Maldives, including those considered high priority, as set out in Annex 3 of document BOD/AV/2023/07 DOC 08.

2 Notes the Secretariat's assessment set out in Annex 2 of the strategic parameters of the Maldives Partnership Compact in Annex 4.

3 Invites the Maldives to submit an application no later than February 29, 2024 of up to a total US$5,000,000 for a system transformation grant, in reference to FRC/2021/09-01, and in accordance with the strategic parameters for GPE support as set out in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of Strategic Parameters and Secretariat Allocation Recommendations (all amounts in US$)		
a.	System Transformation Grant (STG) Indicative Allocation	**US$5,000,000**
b.	**Total Allocation Recommended by the Secretariat (100%)**	**US$5,000,000**
c.	**High Priority Enabling Factors*** ▪ Data and Evidence	
d.	**Focus Area for GPE Funding:** Equity and Inclusion	

* Summarized from the partnership compact. See Annex 4 for full details.

Annex 1: Context and Summary of Strategic Parameters for GPE Support

The following annexes are available on the Governance Portal on the Decisions page:

Annex 2: Secretariat Assessment of the Strategic Parameters
Annex 3: The Maldives Report of the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP)
Annex 4: The Maldives Partnership Compact Including Endorsement by the local education group

Annex 1: Context and Summary of Strategic Parameters for GPE Support

1. Transformation Priorities

The Maldives Partnership Compact has selected the improvement of *equity and inclusion* as its priority reform to achieve system transformation. This priority reform was chosen because even though Maldives is close to universal enrollment at the primary and lower secondary levels, many of the country's small, remote islands have not benefitted equally from socioeconomic development, and considerable disparities still exist in terms of both access and student learning, especially for the most vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities. Regarding gender gaps, although girls remain in the education system for more years, boys have higher participation in the labor market, perhaps due to social norms.

The partnership compact's theory of change identifies both the root causes for these challenges and the interventions to tackle them. Reasons include the dispersed geography of Maldives; biases towards higher education; challenges associated with teacher education and deployment for children with special needs; and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership compact proposes five major interventions: 1. Use of educational data to support student learning and decision-making; 2. Implement remediation strategies and learning loss recovery; 3. Develop teacher capacity for equity and inclusion; 4. Strengthen ability to implement curriculum for inclusion and equity; and 5. Provision of accessible, equitable, and inclusive learning environments. The expected outcome is to *reduce the learning gaps and increase the education provision for children with special needs and disabilities*.

The Maldives Partnership Compact was developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education with guidance from the local education group. Its production entailed several consultations among community members across different regions of the Maldives. The compact clearly indicates the efforts to align and build upon partner resources and capabilities and outlines how other partners will contribute to its implementation. In that sense, the local education group envisions that, besides providing equal opportunities to all as mandated by the Education Act, progress in the identified priority area of equity and inclusion with strong support from the government and partners will create a virtuous circle of better education results and improved accountability towards education system transformation.

2. *Enabling Factors for System Transformation*

Data and evidence: The local education group and the ITAP rated this enabling factor as a high priority. This is because, even though Maldives has a strong track record of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data through an Education Management and Information System (EMIS), the ITAP considered that the Ministry of Education lacks the capacity to scrutinize the data collected and make policy judgments and planning decisions based on the evidence. Addressing the suggestions from the ITAP, the partnership compact proposes a series of interventions aimed at strengthening the EMIS, including supporting regular data collection, and expanding the information collected on students by disability status and by the risk of dropping out, among other improvements. Furthermore, the partnership compact includes interventions to improve the capacity of the ministry to analyze data and support the generation and usage of evidence to improve policy-making, especially regarding equity and inclusion. The partnership compact indicates the use of resources from the system capacity grant and the multiplier grant to support the implementation of the proposed activities.

Gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring: The local education group and the ITAP rated this enabling factor as a medium priority. Maldives has made consistent progress towards establishing a strong planning and monitoring tradition at the central level. However, despite improvements, the local education group still identified the need for comprehensive sector planning monitoring reports and of joint sector reviews as bottlenecks for planning and management efforts towards a more equitable education system. Further improvements to this area will also require strengthening the planning capacity of the local governments.

Sector coordination: This enabling factor was rated as a high priority by the local education group and as a medium priority by the ITAP. The local education group flagged the lack of joint sector reviews and recordkeeping of partners' meetings as limiting the achievement of equitable education goals. In addition, the partnership compact indicates that the local education group needs to be more inclusive. Partners at the country level have expressed the intention to revise the composition of the local education group and to hold regular meetings, including annual joint sector reviews. However, challenges still need to be addressed in terms of the number of new members that should be incorporated.

Volume, equity and efficiency of domestic financing: this enabling factor was rated as a medium priority by the local education group and as low priority by the ITAP. Although the percentage of public expenditure devoted to education is 11 percent (below the 20 percent benchmark), the share of GDP invested in education shows an adequate volume of domestic financing. Furthermore, the government has committed to increase this percentage from 4 to 4.5 percent in the next two years. Therefore, the main challenges in terms of domestic financing are in the dimensions of equity and efficiency and both the local education group and the ITAP highlighted the need to prepare a Public Expenditure Review with a specific focus on equity and inclusion, as well as a careful analysis of budgeting and on the efficiency of education expenditures.

The partnership compact presents a comprehensive set of interventions for improvement in each of the enabling factors.

3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The partnership compact identifies several performance indicators per each of the five actions, the monitoring and evaluation product and the reporting frequency (i.e. quarterly, annually or bi-annually, depending on the indicator). The local education group members are expected to be key in monitoring the progress toward achieving these indicators through their participation in annual Joint Sector Reviews. The compact also emphasizes the need to improve EMIS and the data collection, analysis and dissemination process to monitor compact implementation successfully.

4. Recommendation and Next Steps

The Maldives Partnership Compact sets out the priority reform and proposes appropriate actions to address key bottlenecks identified in the enabling factors. The proposal is aligned with the Education Act and strongly supported by the local education group. The Secretariat recommends the Board approve the focus area for GPE support to Maldives. The next steps include the preparation of the application for the System Transformation Grant (with an ongoing process to select a grant agent). It is important to provide sufficient time to develop the program. Thus, the Secretariat requests the Board to grant an extension until 7 months after this approval to submit the application, i.e. no later than February 29, 2024.