CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE: AUGUST 11, 2023

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO		
FROM: Fazle Rabbani, CEP Regional Manager; Sven Baeten, Grant Operations Team Lead; David Balwanz, Quality Assurance Team; Ana Tobar, Risk and Finance Team.		
SUBJECT: Approval of Sudan's Accelerated Funding Grant		
Country: Sudan	**Grant Agent:** UNICEF	**Start Date:** August 2023
Grant Type: Accelerated Funding	**Agency fee % (+US$ amount):** US$ 700,000 (7%)	**End Date:** February 2025
Amount: US$10,000,000	**Grant duration:** 18 months	**New End Date:** -N/A
Current Disbursement: Not Applicable		

Action request

- Approve the request for USD 10 million Accelerated Funding (AF) out of the USD 86.5m System Transformation Grant (STG) allocation for Sudan.

Request Summary

Sudan is the 3rd largest country in Africa, now with Africa's largest active conflict in terms of number of people displaced (over 3 million people) internally and across Sudan's 7 neighbors. Given Sudan's population and education needs, under the OM 2025, the country was allocated the 3rd highest allocation in Africa (USD 5m System Capacity Grant, USD 86.5m System Transformation Grant, USD 25m Girls Education Accelerator, up to USD 50m for the Multiplier).

The proposed 18-month grant focuses on delivering urgent and vital educational support to 150,000 crisis-affected children aged 5-18 years in 19 localities across 5 (of the total 18 states) in Sudan - White Nile, Gezira, and Kassala, Sennar and River Nile states. The target locations were selected based on areas receiving the highest numbers of displaced populations and the program is targeting both displaced and host populations. The program, endorsed by the Local Education Group, has been designed by UNICEF, in close collaboration with Save the Children and other stakeholders. Save the Children is concurrently developing a separate AF proposal, to be funded from the previous ESPIG allocation, with planned submission for decision on 16 August 2023. The recently approved USD 5 million (USD 2.5 million for UNICEF and Save the Children each) funding from ECW was also considered during the design process to ensure alignment in geographical targeting and no duplication of interventions.

The first component of the program focuses on "**improving safe and inclusive access to education for crisis-affected girls and boys through responding to the basic and immediate need for children to have safe spaces offering essential psychosocial and learning services" (Component 1 "Access")**. Activities planned under this component include the establishment and running of safe learning spaces, provision of accelerated learning support, procurement, and distribution of teaching, learning, and recreational supplies, incentives for facilitators and teachers, adolescent-led child clubs, and back-to-school campaigns.

The second component works on **"Improved quality learning opportunities in the safe learning spaces and schools through strengthening of facilitators and teachers' capacities" (Component 2 "Quality").** Key activities are training opportunities for facilitators and teachers, engagement of the wider learning and school community and stakeholders in the development and implementation of school improvement plans, and use of school grants.

Finally, the program intends to build resilience by **"strengthening the preparedness and response capacity of education** stakeholders**" (Component 3 "Systems Strengthening").** Activities involve improving the sector's capacities around data collection, monitoring, needs assessments, and information management. Additionally, to improve upon the sector's capacity to prepare for future shocks and crises, the safe learning spaces and schools benefit from also having e-learning centers.

Key expected results are - improving access to education for 150,000 children, enhancing literacy and numeracy skills, increasing retention through accelerated learning programs, and strengthening the capacity of schools and communities to withstand future shocks and crises. The program will prioritize vulnerable and marginalized children, including at-risk boys and girls, and children with disabilities from both displaced and returnee populations in the target states.

An estimated 15 local partner organizations will work alongside and implement on behalf of UNICEF and will coordinate to support state ministries of education as they implement the interventions. This approach will build technical capacity and support resilience both amongst local organizations and in state systems. The local partners will be contracted upon commencement of the program. Funds will not flow to the government of Sudan.

Current Portfolio

Sudan has no active grants currently.

Grant	Amount in US$	Grant Agent	Closing date	Notes
ESPIG	**Total ESPIG:** 61,500,000 **Utilized as of Oct 2021:**10,027,914	World Bank	Implementation was suspended on October 25, 2021.	Grant implementation was suspended due to the coup/ military takeover which triggered OP 7.30 for the World Bank (GA). The GA has agreed to cancel US $10 million from the ESPIG and make it available for this AF.

Sudan also received a COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grant of US$ 10.65 million, approved in August 2020, which was managed initially managed by the World Bank and then taken over by UNICEF in the aftermath of the World Bank's suspension of its program in Sudan following the October 2021 coup. The grant closed in December 2022.

Eligibility Criteria

Ongoing conflict in Sudan, between Rapid Security Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces: In April 2023, disagreement between the leadership of two military factions - the RSF and the SAF, led to fighting and an upsurge in violence, forcing millions of Sudanese into internal displacement or to flee into neighboring countries and development partners evacuated the country. The conflict has now lasted more than 3 months with over 3 million people displaced (2.1 million within in Sudan, 0.9 million in neighboring countries), including almost 1 million children (OCHA, 7 August 2023), and the fighting has substantially impacted education continuity in Sudan. The conflict led to a revision of the Humanitarian Appeal in May 2023 - through the cluster system, a revised Humanitarian Response Plan was developed and launched on 17 May 2023. UNICEF and Save the Children are co-leads of the Education Cluster for the Sudan HRP.

Per GPE guidance, Sudan is eligible up to USD 10 million in Accelerated Funding, based on the amount of its STG allocation.

Significant Opportunities:

The program presents an opportunity to provide essential education support to internally displaced and host community children affected by the ongoing conflict, meeting their urgent needs in ways which are conflict-sensitive, and helping to ensure that systems for education do not collapse. Girls will specifically be targeted with a holistic package of services to support their wellbeing and learning, including through engagement of female facilitators to support girls' participation. GPE's

accelerated funding represents crucial support to the education sector in Sudan at this time, sends strong signals to all partners and demonstrates GPE's ability to assist countries to address the education challenges arising from fragility and conflict. The collaborative efforts among partners, promoted by GPE, highlights GPE's capacity to align with stakeholders and urge coordination across the humanitarian-development nexus, as well as enhance partners' ability to respond to immediate and ongoing crises. Efforts to coordinate funding and messaging with ECW demonstrate harmonization of the global aid architecture to ensure education support to vulnerable children. With UNICEF as grant agent of the GPE AF and also as grantee of the ECW First Emergency Response, opportunities for harmonized monitoring, reporting and learning can be explored. The proposed intervention to strengthen education continuity via e-learning services anchored in formal schools represents an innovative approach in the context of Sudan and similar contexts of fragility, and if successful, could serve as a model for learning and expansion under future support.

Significant Issues and Risks

This program comes with significant risks. The security situation in Sudan remains very uncertain as the April 2023 conflict has triggered other internal conflicts and the violence continues. For operational and safety reasons, the proposal deliberately does not seek to work in areas of active hostility, such as in Khartoum state, rather in relatively safer areas which have received large numbers of internally displaced people. If the conflict spreads even further, the areas targeted by this program may themselves become unsafe to work. Tracking of the security situation and political developments is critical, as the program is implemented, to inform ongoing decision making. Costs to operate in Sudan are high and escalating and these will also need to be monitored. UNICEF and other partners have consistently flagged this issue, as some operational costs have trebled, compared with pre-April 2023 levels, and UNICEF has committed to updating the Secretariat on actuals vs planned costs as needed, during implementation.

The education needs in Sudan are great with 8.6 million children in need of education services identified by the Humanitarian Response Plan of May 2023 (4.3m children targeted). The targets from this AF program represent 7.6% of the of the USD 131 million needed for education as identified in the revised Humanitarian Response Plan (15.2% when the second forthcoming Accelerated Funding request by Save the Children of USD 10 million is included), meaning that the level of need, even with this GPE AF support, remains very high. Coupled with the ongoing violence in Sudan and the uncertainty over when and whether a lasting ceasefire can be agreed, the situation in Sudan remains very fragile and this is likely to be the case for some time. Beyond this immediate financing, local education group partners and GPE will need to strategically consider medium-term support to Sudan, with a focus on further addressing needs of vulnerable children and preventing education system collapse. In the coming months, the local education group must endorse a way forward for the paused ESPIG funds under the World Bank – either endorsing World Bank proposals for Third Party Implementation or cancelling and reprogramming the funds. Sudan's remainder allocation under OM2025 and how this can be flexibly used will also need to be discussed and approvals sought from the GPE Board as needed. Given the scale of need, the regional importance of Sudan and the place of Sudan in the GPE portfolio, GPE's actions to support Sudan (and its neighbors), with the challenges arising from fragility and conflict, will need to be managed proactively.

Recommendation

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that the **RM recommends to the CEO the approval of Accelerated Funding of US $10,000,000.00 for Sudan with UNICEF as grant agent.**

RECOMMENDED DECISION
Grant: Accelerated Funding
Country: Sudan

CEO/2023/08-XX–XXXX Allocation for Sudan funding request. The CEO, in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors:

- Approves new Accelerated Funding of the System Transformation Grant indicative allocation for Sudan in the amount of US$10 million with UNICEF as grant agent, plus an additional US$ 700,000 in agency fees.

Date: August 14, 2023



Laura Frigenti, CEO