BHUTAN - COVID-19 AF: Approval Memo to CEO

Review meeting participants: Nilse Ryman, David Balwanz, Mohammad Tariq Khan, Javier Luque, Ana Tobar, and Anna-Maria Tammi.

Review Meeting Date: August 19, 2020

Date of final proposal submission: August 13, 2020

1. **Grant Summary:** The GPE grant will support the Kingdom of Bhutan in the implementation of Phase II of the national COVID-19 Response Plan for Education in Emergencies. The support will include strengthening of the Ministry of Education's capacity to improve the quality of distance learning; training of teachers on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT); and production of self-learning material for children in rural areas. In addition, through GPE support, Bhutan will support children with special needs through the provision of tablets and smart phones so that these students can access lessons, accompanied by the development of customized teaching and learning materials. The program will also support WASH interventions in schools as well as the provision of psychosocial support. GPE support will be delivered in complementarity to support currently being provided by the Kingdom of Bhutan and other development partners.

   During Phase I of the response plan, the country developed an adapted school curriculum leading to the development and broadcasting of 440 video lessons on national TV. In addition, teachers and students were provided support through social media (Grade PP-II) including through Google classroom (Grade IV-XII) as an interactive platform. Self-Instructional Materials (SIM) and radio lessons, launched on May 2, 2020, were provided to support the education of children in remote communities.

2. **Key information:**

Country: Bhutan		
a.	Accelerated Funding Covid-19 Allocation	US$ 750,000
b.	Allocation Requested (100%)	US$ 750,000
c.	**Allocation Recommended**	US$ 750,000[1]
d.	Grant Agent	Save the Children USA
e.	Agency Fee % + US$ amount	7% (US$ 52,500)
f.	Grant duration	16 months
g.	Expected Start Date	08/26/2020
h.	Expected End Date	12/31/2021

3. **Recommendation: Grant is recommended for approval.**

4. **Decision:**

[1] Includes US$ 75,000 for the cost of the grant agent to perform its roles and responsibilities

RECOMMENDED DECISION

In line with the delegated authority granted by the Board of Directors, the GPE CEO approves the COVID-19 accelerated funding request for Bhutan in the amount of US$750,000 plus an additional US$52,500 in agency fees to Save the Children USA as Grant Agent. The grant has a start date of August 26, 2020, and an end date of 31 December 2021.

The GPE CEO recognized with appreciation the leadership and commitment of the Kingdom of Bhutan in preparing a national response plan and grant proposal that will mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector as well as support the recovery of the education system from the crisis.

Recognizing the GPE Board's intent to proceed with the COVID-19 funding on a timeline which acknowledges the COVID-19 emergency, the Government and Grant Agent are asked to move forward with implementation immediately while addressing the following points and reporting back to the Secretariat in three weeks:

Request for Report-Back

1. The Grant Agent is requested to provide a revised program document (including budget with GA implementation support costs outlined and results framework) following consultation with the LEG and agreement by the Government. Upon receipt of the revised program document, the Secretariat will verify compliance with each of the requirements below, but there will be no additional grant approval issued, nor further re-assessment of the program.

    i) The Grant Agent is requested to share the criteria to be used for targeting beneficiaries of interventions in components 2 and 3 to demonstrate the equity focus.

    ii) The Grant Agent is requested to report all relevant core indicators as both the number and the percentage of children reached. Indicator 2 from Table 1 of GPE's M&E guidance should be included in the program's results framework.

    iii) In line with GPE Grants and Performance Committee guidance on the current ESPIG related to "central residential schools" it is specifically requested that no GPE financing be used to support these schools and that no GPE grant resources be spent on ECCD centers established in replacement of primary schools that are closed in order to transfer students to a residential school.

The Secretariat also raises the following observations which are recommendations rather than requirements:

Observations

a. Given the urgency of the crisis, grant implementation is to commence on schedule with the Grant Agent to submit a cash transfer request within two weeks of approval to facilitate the timely release of funds in support of program implementation.

b. The Ministry of Education is encouraged to make its COVID response plan publicly available through its website.

c. The Ministry of Education is requested to ensure that all equipment procured through this grant should be owned by the Ministry of Education and not by private entities.

Reporting

Please note that during the implementation period, the GPE Secretariat will require the Grant Agent to fill out a quarterly survey which will request core data on program implementation. At the end of the implementation period, the Grant Agent is expected to submit a completion report to the GPE Secretariat. Detailed information on the reporting requirement is available in the Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding on GPE website.

Reprogramming

The Government and the Grant Agent may reprogram this grant, in consultation with the Local Education Group and where active the Education cluster, for an amount not to exceed 25% of the allocation without prior Secretariat approval but must disclose such cases to the Secretariat. For an amount of 25% or more, as well as for any extension, advance approval from the Secretariat must be sought. The process for advanced approval will be that of non-minor revisions of ESPIG which can be found here: https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/policy-education-sector-program-implementation-grants

CEO Approval:
Alice P. Albright
Chief Executive Officer
Global Partnership for Education



Date: August 26, 2020

CEO Memo - Annex 1
Program Standards for Assessment of
COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Applications (Country Grants)

(Last updated April 2020)

The GPE Secretariat will complete this matrix to assess country applications for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding.

Program Standards: COVID-19 Accelerated Funding				**Comments**
Country:			BHUTAN	
Grant Agent:			Save the Children USA	
Date of Submission:			Request submitted to GPE Secretariat: 7/30/2020	
			Secretariat Review completed: 8/20/2020	
Yes	No	N/A	**Eligibility**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the Country eligible for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding?	Yes
☒	☐	☐	Is the grant agent accredited by GPE? *Please confirm via COVID-19 FAQ list.*	Yes
☒	☐	☐	Has GA selection followed a clear and transparent process, with the process documented in the proposal?[2]	Yes. MoE invited expressions of interest and only Save the Children expressed interest. Subsequently the LEG proposed Save the Children as GA.
☒	☐	☐	Has the proposal been endorsed by the Local Education Group (and the Education Cluster where relevant)?	Yes. The Education Sector Coordination Meeting (ESCM), i.e. LEG, endorsed the proposal on 23 July 2020.
☒	☐	☐	Is the proposal based on a publicly available government response plan related to COVID-19, including education? *The proposal should explain where and how the response plan has been made publicly available (e.g., Government website, distribution to key stakeholders, etc.).*	Yes. The proposal is based on the COVID-19 Response Plan Education in Emergencies Phase II Plan. It is mentioned that the plan has been made publicly available, however it does not seem to be located on the MoE's website nor it is stored in UNESCO's repository of COVID plans. Observation:

[2] If a grant agent has been selected for the 'regular' Accelerated Funding window announced in December 2019, the government can decide to maintain the same grant agent for the COVID-19 accelerated funding.

				The MoE is encouraged to make its COVID response plan publicly available through its website.
☒	☐	☐	Will the program become effective within one month of GPE approval, with completion within 12-18 months from the date of program effectiveness?	Yes. The start date is 1 September 2020 and the implementation period is 16 months.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				
Yes	No	N/A	**Program Design & Coordination**	
☒	☐	☐	Are proposal activities (i) supporting basic education only, (ii) within the boundary of eligible activities under this funding window (see COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Guidelines, which focus on recovery and mitigation), or, if not within the boundary, are from the government response plan and well-justified, and (iii) likely to support program objectives / progress toward expected outputs and intermediate outcomes?	(i) Yes. The program includes support from pre-primary up to grade 10. In the Bhutanese education system basic education covers children from pre-primary to grade 10 as per the Constitution. (ii) Yes. Activities are aligned with the national response plan. The program would support strengthening the quality of distance learning activities, specific learning support for children with special needs, psychosocial support, and WASH interventions. Accessible hand washing facilities and other COVID-19 preventive measures have been made a mandatory requirement in all schools with the outbreak of COVID-19. The video lessons are being developed by MoE in collaboration with the Royal Education Council (REC). Currently, video lessons are developed with the help of a pool of selected teachers and are recorded in a recording studio. The program will do the recording of lessons initially in private studios and will procure items to enhance the recording capacity within the Ministry of Education. After a quality check the lessons are aired on BBS channel daily, free of cost. Proposed decision language (observation)**:** **The Ministry of Education is requested to ensure that all equipment procured through this grant should be owned by the Ministry of Education and not by private entities.** (iii) Yes, activities are designed to support program objectives and the goals of the Bhutan Education Sector Response Plan, which include: Ensure health,

				safety, and wellbeing of children, students, learners, and education personnel; Provide platform for students to access and avail educational services remotely; Support teachers, facilitators, and instructors to use digital and remote teaching materials; Provide psychosocial support to students, learners, and education personnel. In terms of nutrition, which is a concern in the country, the plan is to utilize the existing stockpile of food rations in schools and package/distribute these to students who need them (not to be supported by this program).
☐	☒	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, reach poor, vulnerable, or otherwise disadvantaged children, including girls, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? *For targeted interventions, the proposal should include the targeting criteria to ensure equity (i.e., that interventions reach vulnerable populations).*	Partially. The program would support self-instruction materials, which are print materials targeting students in rural areas who do not have access to the distance learning through TV or internet. The upgrading of toilets will support mostly primary schools and some secondary schools with primary sections. It is mentioned that the provision of safe drinking water will reach about 13 % of primary schools in the country. No further information about targeting has been provided. Proposed decision language: **The Grant Agent is requested to share the criteria to be used for targeting beneficiaries of interventions in components 2 and 3 to demonstrate the equity focus.** The standard will be met when the above is addressed. The attention to children with disabilities is a strong point in this program. The program includes a specific component targeting children with special needs and proposes to procure and distribute tablets and smart phones to these children. It would also support data charges for 3 months in order to help students access lessons online. If the school closure situation prolongs beyond 3 months, the ministry will explore other options to provide data charges or alternatives such as schools uploading the teaching and learning materials directly into the tablets/phone periodically.
☒	☐	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, identify and address specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19?	The program identifies inadequate access to menstrual hygiene as a barrier faced by girls. To address this, it proposes to provide sanitary pads and awareness campaigns on health and hygiene practices for girls. It also

				proposes to build capacity on gender equality practices of program staff and partners, including on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis.
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal identify a relevant COVID-19 response coordination mechanism(s) and confirm that the program will be represented in this mechanism?	Yes. The relevant coordination mechanism is the LEG (ESCM) and the proposal confirms that their role will be to ensure synergies and coherence between this project and other MoE activities particularly related to the COVID-19 Response Plan Education in Emergencies Phase II Plan.
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal (i) provide information on the sources of financing for COVID response and early recovery activities planned and (ii) information demonstrating that GPE funds will be complementary to government or other donor funding, including from Education Cannot Wait, where relevant?	(i) Yes, the proposal provides information on sources of financing for COVID response. Support has been provided by Japan, ADB, UN COVID 19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, UNICEF and Save the Children International. (ii) While there is limited detailed information on the use of previous funding, some of it has been in-kind support e.g. for WASH interventions and hygiene. The total amount of funding from other sources is modest, so it is likely that GPE funds will be complementary. ECW is not engaged in Bhutan.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				
Yes	No	N/A	**Budget**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the proposed budget (excluding agency fee) within the GPE Board approved allocation for the country? *	Proposed budget is consistent with the revised GPE Board approved allocation for Bhutan.
☒	☐	☐	Does the submitted budget clearly outline component, activity and grant agent implementation support costs? *Estimated unit costs and quantities should be clearly indicated. (Budget can be provided in a separate document from program document, preferably in a spreadsheet format)* *	Budget is presented as part of the program document. Components, activities, and sub-activities are clearly outlined. Budget includes assumptions on unit costs and quantities per line-item. Unit costs are considered reasonable. The budget indicates GA implementation support cost of US$75,000 which represents 10% of the requested amount. However, supplementary information from the GA indicates that this cost includes Bhutan office implementation costs of $63,145 and other staff implementation support costs of $11,855. *Correspondence with the GA clarified these latter costs, which should be clearly stated in the revised budget.*

☒	☐	☐	Is there a clear indication of the program's sources of funding, including which parts of the program are supported by each source? *	The project is based on the Bhutan Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan Phase. The proposal lists other sources of funding providing in-kind and cash support to MoE's COVID response plan.
☒	☐	☐	Is the budget, and its assumptions, coherent with other parts of the program design? *This includes coherence between budgeted quantities and results framework output indicators where possible. **	Program budget is consistent with program components, implementation plan, and the Results Framework.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				
Yes	No	N/A	**M & E and Results Framework**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the proposed M & E framework costed and likely to support effective monitoring of program implementation and results reporting? [3] Are roles and responsibilities clearly mapped? **	The M&E framework is costed, and roles and responsibilities are clearly mapped.
☒	☐	☐	Does the program include a complete results framework, including the key output and outcome indicators, baselines and targets and data sources? *Indicators should be disaggregated by gender where relevant. **	A results framework with relevant indicators and disaggregation is included.
☐	☒	☐	Does the proposal confirm agreement to collect and report on required core indicators (where relevant) and follow GPE M&E Guidance for COVID-19 AF Grants, including on standardized program reporting? **	Core indicator 2 from table 1 of GPE's M&E guidance is required because corresponding activities are included. Outcome indicator 4 from the program results framework is currently reported as the number of children reached, this should also be reported as the percentage of children in the relevant age group in the program reached. Proposed decision language: **The Grant Agent is requested to report all relevant core indicators as both the number and the percentage of children reached. Indicator 2 from Table 1 of GPE's M&E guidance should be included in the program's results framework.**

[3] Government-led school census and EMIS activities may be disrupted because of the pandemic; the proposal should ensure available capacity and financing for data collection with this risk in mind.

				The standard will be met when the above is addressed
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal include an activity line and budget for development and implementation of an approach to learning from evidence? *(see GPE M&E Guidance for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants) **	A costed learning from evidence plan is included.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				
Yes	No	N/A	**Implementation Arrangements & Readiness**	
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal include a sufficiently detailed implementation plan with a timeline, activities, and roles and responsibilities clearly described?	Yes. A clear implementation plan is included with timeline and activities. Roles and responsibilities are noted clearly elsewhere.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently well-described to identify program management structures, responsible actors and processes?	Yes. The Policy and Planning Division (PPD) of MoE will serve as the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) with the Chief Planning Officer as the project manager. Each of the four components of the program will be implemented by the relevant division/agency of the MoE. The Secretary of the MoE shall provide oversight and overall direction for project implementation.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements are sufficiently described to determine flow of funds? *	Yes. Flow of funds procedures are adequately described. GPE funds will be transferred from the GA to the Dept. Of Public Accounts and thereon to the implementing departments, with release of tranches from the GA dependent upon the receipt of satisfactory progress and financial reports.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed financial management, auditing, and procurement arrangements clearly described and appropriate for the country context? *	Yes. The Ministry of Education will be responsible for financial management and reporting to the GA, and procurement. The GA will perform periodic financial review of the implementing departments. The grant's expenditure will be monitored by the Royal Audit Authority. Procurement will follow govt. Systems and processes.
☐	☐	☒	Are proposed sub-contracting arrangements clearly described and appropriate?	n/a
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation support and oversight arrangements by the grant agent well described?	Yes. The GA's support role is adequately described and includes: technical support, monitoring and evaluation, and contribution of its own personnel (including local finance Sr. Manager) in coordination and review. The existing joint biannual, midterm and end-term Project Review Committee meetings

				of the MoE and Save the Children will be used as the platform to jointly review progress.
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal ensure implementation arrangements will be in place to ensure rapid start-up? Specifically, will fiduciary and administrative arrangements allow for disbursement by the proposed start date? Will major interventions will be ready to be launched by the proposed start date? *	Yes. The GA considers that the implementing departments of the Royal Govt. Of Bhutan which are currently managing the GPE funded ESPIG have sufficient capacity to manage the activities and increased flow of funds.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				
Yes	No	N/A	**Risk Assessment and Mitigation**	
☒	☐	☐	Are risks / insecurity that could threaten any vulnerable population (e.g. girls, displaced children) identified, with mitigation actions proposed?[4]	Yes. The proposal mentions that due to school closure, children are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and their familiar social network of friends and peer relationships have been disrupted. The program includes a component specifically on psychosocial support to mitigate some of these impacts. The proposal mentions that girls are more vulnerable to discontinuing education in this situation. It is more common for families to rely on older daughters to look after their younger siblings and manage household chores, which can be detrimental to their learning.
☒	☐	☐	Are risks related to fiduciary arrangements, including financial management, procurement, governance, and safeguards issues (harm to people or the environment) and adequate mitigation actions are identified? *	Yes. Although there is no risk matrix, the results framework considers risks and mitigations inherent to each component. The financial management, oversight and reporting arrangements appear appropriate to mitigate implicit risks of financial mismanagement. Procurement risks associated with the availability of hygiene equipment and ICT equipment are considered and appropriate mitigations identified. Governance arrangements as described in the project implementation section appear appropriate to mitigate mismanagement risks. Psychosocial support measures are programmed within component 4. There are no major civil works, so it is reasonable to expect that environmental risks are not identified as key risks.

[4] For example, does the proposal refer to international health and safety standards regarding school closure, or guidance on re-opening schools?

☐	☐	☒	For grants exceeding US $5 million and the Grant Agent is an INGO: are there any significant risks regarding the capacity of the country office to perform the GA role that do not appear to be mitigated (e.g. through increased support from regional or HQ level, etc.)?	n/a
☐	☒	☐	Does the proposal trigger any GPE policies (e.g., GPE Private Sector Policy) which would require extraordinary consultation with GPE governance structures?	No. The program document confirms that no direct support to private schools is provided through the GPE grant. The program does not provide direct support to not for profit non state providers of core education services. The program document notes that the although the grant activities primarily focus on government schools, some activities such as the video lessons and psycho-social support services will benefit all students in both government and private schools throughout the country. The PSS services are through a distance modality (online / phone line) and are made available directly to any child (as a public service) rather than through schools. Additionally, review of this standard brought up the issue of central residential schools which is reflected in the GPC decision language of its approval of the parent ESPIG (see Approval of Bhutan ESPIG, GPC -2018-06-02). The decision language notes, *The Committee notes the potential negative consequences of establishing central residential schools in Bhutan, forcing young children to leave their homes to attend school. It invites the partners along with the Government to conduct additional analysis and hold more consultations with communities to find a good balance between children's best interests and efficiency in service provision. Moreover, the Committee specifically requests that no GPE grant resources be spent on ECCD centers established in replacement of primary schools that are closed in order to transfer students to a residential school. The Committee encourages Bhutan to consider cost-effective school models for hard-to-reach children used in other countries, such as mobile schools or multi-grade classrooms.* Based on this precedent, confirmed though the GPC and dialogue with country-level partners, the below decision language was agreed on.

				Proposed decision language: **In line with GPE Grants and Performance Committee guidance on the current ESPIG related to "central residential schools" it is specifically requested that no GPE financing be used to support these schools and that no GPE grant resources be spent on ECCD centers established in replacement of primary schools that are closed in order to transfer students to a residential school.**
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				
Please provide additional comments/details, if necessary.				

Feedback in the above templated was completed, reviewed and approved for CEO decision by the following persons, on the date indicated:

Completed by (COVID-19 Education Specialist): Anna-Maria Tammi **Date:** 7/30/2020

Completed by (Risk and Finance related questions as per *): Simon Hall and Ana Tobar Lozano **Date:** 8/3/2020

Completed by (M & E related questions as per **): Rudraksh Mitra **Date:** 8/03/2020

Reviewed by (CL): Muhammad Tariq Khan **Date:** 8/17/2020

Reviewed by (QA): Responsibility shared by ES and TL **Date:** 8/19/2020

Reviewed by (Team Lead): David Balwanz **Date:** 8/20/2020

Approved by (jointly by QA and Team Lead if <$1m): Nilse Ryman / David Balwanz **Date:** 8/19/2020; / 8/19/2020

Approved by (Manager 1 if >$1m and up to $10m): **Date:**

Approved by (Manager 2 if >$10m): **Date:**