LESOTHO - COVID-19 AF: Approval Memo to CEO

The application was reviewed virtually (no meeting) by: Margarita Focas Licht, Matthew Smith, Fazle Rabbani, David A. Balwanz, Gauri Khanduja, Simon Hall, Ana Tobar Lozano and Alice Yang.

Review Meeting Date: June 5, 2020

Date of proposal submission: May 11, 2020

1. **Grant Summary:**
   The overall objective of the proposed program is to support Government and partners in close collaboration with the LEG to reduce the risks of the social impacts of COVID-19 on the education of children by ensuring safe school operations and the continuity of learning and well-being for children and youth, especially for the most vulnerable affected by the outbreak. Five main interventions are described in the application: (i) support response coordination and real-time monitoring (focusing on the most vulnerable); (ii) ensure safe school operations including through hygiene supplies and risk communication; (iii) support continuity of learning through access to remote learning programs as appropriate for Lesotho; (iv) scale-up child protection and WASH services; and (v) Ensure smooth re-opening of schools through back to school campaigns, catch-up classes and accelerated learning.

2. **Key Information:**

Country: Lesotho		
a.	Accelerated Funding Covid-19 Allocation	US$ 5 million revised to US$ 3.5 million by GPE Board on May 29, 2020
b.	Allocation Requested (100%)	US$ 3,465,053
c.	**Allocation Recommended**	US$ 3,470,000[1]
d.	Grant Agent	UNICEF
e.	Agency Fee % + US$ amount	7% in the amount of US$ 242,900
f.	Grant duration	18 months
g.	Expected Start Date	06/09/2020
h.	Expected End Date	11/30/2021

Secretariat assessment of proposal against program standards, with accompanying staff and management sign-off, is included as Annex 1. Grant Agent proposal is included as Annex 2.

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

4. **Decision Language:**

[1] Includes US$187,168 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 Lesotho in the amount of US$ 3,470,000 plus an additional US$ 242,900 in agency fees to UNICEF as Grant Agent. The grant has a start date of (DATE OF CEO APPROVAL LETTER), and an end date of November 30, 2021.

The GPE CEO recognized with appreciation the leadership and commitment of the Government of Lesotho 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.

The GPE Board approved the COVID-19 funding mechanism on a first come, first served approach for the first US$ 125 million of the original US$ 225 million COVID-19 country funding window. Although the remaining US$ 100 million has been subsequently significantly increased to US$ 350 million by the Board, the demand for the COVID-19 funding mechanism still exceeds the available funds and the maximum allocation for Lesotho is now US $3.5 million, lower than the initial allocation of US $5 million.

Unless otherwise indicated by the decision language request for Report-Back, and keeping within the original budget of each component, the government and grant agent have full authority to prioritize within the approved activities of the original application, after consultation with the local education group.

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, monitor and report back to the Secretariat:

Request for Report-Back

1. Noting that the program targets several at-risk groups that are not included in the risk assessment accompanying the proposal, the Grant Agent is requested to include in the first quarterly report to the Secretariat an overview of risks that could threaten vulnerable populations (i.e. rural boys, poorest wealth quintiles, children with disabilities, etc.) and clarify how these are mitigated.

2. The Secretariat notes that certain details of the accelerated learning activity are still under development and that the activity may not involve teacher training. The Grant Agent is requested to include Indicator 5 (Table 2) from GPE's M&E Guidance on COVID-19 Accelerated Funding if activities related to teacher training to support accelerated learning are included in the program, and to share an updated results framework with the GPE Secretariat when/if applicable.

The Secretariat also raises the following points of observation, which are recommendations rather than requirements:

Observations

a) Given the urgency of the crisis, grant implementation to commence on schedule and 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) To ensure public access to the government response plan, the Secretariat recommends that the Ministry of Education post the plan on its website.

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: June 16, 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:			LESOTHO	
Grant Agent:			UNICEF	
Date of Submission:			Request submitted to GPE Secretariat: 5/11/2020	
			Secretariat Review completed: 6/5/2020	
Yes	No	N/A	**Eligibility**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the Country eligible for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding?	GPE Board approved originally on March 31, 2020 a US$ 5M allocation which was subsequently revised on May 29, 2020 to US$ 3.5M.
☒	☐	☐	Is the grant agent accredited by GPE? *Please confirm via COVID-19 FAQ list.*	UNICEF is the Grant Agent.
☒	☐	☐	Has GA selection followed a clear and transparent process, with the process documented in the proposal?[2]	Recognizing the urgency presented in the Accelerated Funding guidelines, MOET made the decision to nominate the Grant Agent from the pre-approved organization list and to seek LEG endorsement. Based on the comparative advantages in responding to humanitarian responses globally and the history of support to the MOET in humanitarian as well as regular education sector support, MOET nominated UNICEF. A meeting of the LEG was held on 24th of April 2020 and UNICEF was approved as the Grant Agent. (p.10)

[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.

☒	☐	☐	Has the proposal been endorsed by the Local Education Group (and the Education Cluster where relevant)?	The LEG through a virtual meeting on May 11, 2020 endorsed the application and the Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan.
☒	☐	☐	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.).*	The plan was developed through a participatory process and included a series of reviews and consultations with all education cooperating partners including the LEG and the Education in Emergencies Working Group. However, there is no mention in the application that the Response Plan is publicly available. The GA confirmed later that MOET will post the Response Plan on its website by June 12, 2020. Since it is not presently available, the proposed decision language still needs to be made: Proposed decision language: **To ensure public access to the government response plan, the Secretariat recommends that the Ministry of Education post the plan on its website.** The standard will be met when the above is addressed.
☒	☐	☐	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 implementation period is 18 months, from June 1, 2020 to December 1, 2021.
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) A total of 477,612 learners from pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary levels will benefit from this grant. (ii) The activities proposed are within the boundary of eligible activities under the COVID-19 AF window. (iii) The activities are well aligned to the program objectives. See program summary above for more information.
☒	☐	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, reach poor, vulnerable, or otherwise disadvantaged children, including girls, affected by the COVID-19	While the program will target all districts in Lesotho, some districts will receive more support particularly those where net enrolment rates are lower and dropouts

			pandemic? *For targeted interventions, the proposal should include the targeting criteria to ensure equity (i.e., that interventions reach vulnerable populations).*	are higher, those with significant numbers of schools with poor WASH facilities and rural districts with high concentration of poverty. In order to ensure continued learning, the program proposes a mix of support to learners with remote learning during school closures, with emphasis on children with disabilities. To this end, delivery of learning and instruction materials will ensure closed captions, live sign language interpretation, large print, and visual or audio adaptations of material.
☒	☐	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, identify and address specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19?	The program recognizes that Lesotho has a high incidence of sexual violence in schools, with schools being the second most reported location where 13-17-year-old girls experience sexual violence. It identifies that increased economic pressure caused by the pandemic may likely increase incidence of abuse and that it is important to ensure safety in schools and to provide referral mechanisms and tools that allow children to report such incidents. This will be done through the development and roll-out of child-friendly complaints and feedback mechanisms in schools through child helpline. It proposes to develop, disseminate and display messages in schools on child protection and available services. It also proposes to strengthen teacher and education personnel knowledge related to GBV risk mitigation, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) child safeguarding and safe referral practices, initially through sensitization using SMS tools (U-Report/RapidPro) and subsequently through the production of IEC materials distributed in schools. The program also considers barriers faced by boys, which is a challenge in Lesotho. Participation of boys in education, particularly in rural mountain areas, is the lowest of any group. It is expected that this negative trend may be exacerbated by COVID-19 given the higher opportunity cost of going to school following the economic shock as a result of the crisis. The accelerated learning guidelines and support program will target disadvantaged learners, particularly adolescents transitioning from primary to (lower) secondary education with an emphasis on rural boys.
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal identify a relevant COVID-19 response coordination mechanism(s) and confirm that the program will be represented in this mechanism?	There is an Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiEWG) which reports to the LEG. The proposal mentions that the EiEWG will undertake frequent progress monitoring of the program and raise issues and bottlenecks on the ground. The GA further explained that the national COVID response is led by a ministerial committee that includes the MOET and at the technical level the MOET is represented by the Principal Secretary and the CEO of Primary education. They

				regularly report on support from development partners including UNICEF, World Bank particularly in relation to filling gaps that are required in the education sector response. The MOET report in relation to the education sector response plan and the GPE program was developed from that so will be reported in this forum.
☒	☐	☐	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?	The World Food Programme (WFP) will support initiatives surrounding school feeding and UNICEF is supporting all aspects of continuity of learning, child protection and psychosocial support, provision of WASH services in schools as well as monitoring and evaluation. The World Bank is working with the MOET to explore how the existing ESPIG and other World Bank funding can be restructured to support the response. This proposal outlines areas that are not covered by WFP and WB support.
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? *	The proposed budget per the application is $3,465,053, which is consistent with the revised GPE Board Approved maximum allocation for Lesotho of US$3.5 million.
☒	☐	☐	Does the submitted budget clearly outline component, activity and grant agent implementation support costs? *Estimated unit costs and quantities should be clearly indicated. (Budget can be provided in a separate document from program document, preferably in a spreadsheet format) *	Presented budget is structured per output and activity. Budget assumptions on unit costs and quantities clearly indicated and deemed reasonable. Grant agent supervision costs of US$ 187,168 represent 5% of the total budget, which is considered reasonable.
☒	☐	☐	Is there a clear indication of the program's sources of funding, including which parts of the program are supported by each source? *	GPE is complementary to the National COVID 19 response plan. The program document indicates that the GPE funding will support areas that are not covered by WFP and WB support.
☒	☐	☐	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. *	Budget assumptions are consistent with the results framework and program description.

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? **	Costs related to monitoring and evaluation are included in the budget. In addition, roles and responsibilities related to monitoring and evaluation are identified in the implementation plan and the monitoring and evaluation section of the proposal.
☒	☐	☐	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. ** *	The proposal includes a results framework with key activities, indicators, baseline, target, frequency and gender disaggregation, wherever applicable.
☐	☒	☐	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? **	The proposal includes most core indicators. However, the GA responded that activities related to indicator 5 have not yet been finalised i.e. it is unclear how the accelerated learning will be undertaken and whether it would involve teacher training. Recommended decision language: **The Grant Agent is requested to include Indicator 5 (Table 2) from GPE's M&E Guidance on COVID-19 Accelerated Funding, if activities related to teacher training to support accelerated learning are included in the program.** 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) ** *	The learning from evidence approach has been described in the monitoring and evaluation section and costed in the budget.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☐ No ☒				

[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.

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?	The implementation plan lists the activities, their timeline, and those responsible.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently well-described to identify program management structures, responsible actors and processes?	The MOET will lead the implementation of the program and the proposal lists the responsible units. UNICEF is responsible for ensuring that implementation is in line with the proposed interventions and for providing proper monitoring and quality assurance of the implementation. The program will be managed by UNICEF Lesotho Basic Education and Adolescent Development Section under the responsibility of the Section Chief.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements are sufficiently described to determine flow of funds? *	Although there is no distinct section describing the flow of funds, UNICEF's direct financial management of the project and application of HACT procedures provide sufficient outline of the control of the flow of funds.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed financial management, auditing, and procurement arrangements clearly described and appropriate for the country context? *	UNICEF will provide direct financial management and HACT procedures are applicable to audit and procurement.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed sub-contracting arrangements clearly described and appropriate?	UNICEF plans to provide grants/awards to NGOs who will be responsible for providing technical assistance to MOET in key program areas, particularly the provision of WASH facilities. UNICEF will enter into a Program Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to establish the partnership framework. The PCA will define the rights and obligations of UNICEF and the NGO, as well as the terms and conditions of the partnership. The PCA will be operationalized through program documents that define the expected results, activities, related resource requirements and work plan.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation support and oversight arrangements by the grant agent well described?	UNICEF is responsible for the management of the grant as well as financial management. UNICEF Financial and Procurement Rules and Regulations are outlined in Annex 2.
☒	☐	☐	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	Implementation delay risks are included in the risk matrix and appropriate mitigations are described to allow for timely start-up.

			major interventions will be ready to be launched by the proposed start date? *	
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]	The Risk Mitigation Table mentions UNICEF's safeguards policy but does not go into any specifics on risks that could threaten the vulnerable population. Proposed decision language: **In the revised program document, elaborate on risks that could threaten vulnerable populations (i.e. rural boys, poorest wealth quintiles, children with disabilities, etc.) and identify mitigation measures.** The standard will be met when the above is addressed.
☒	☐	☐	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? *	The risk matrix considers financial, procurement, environmental and safeguarding risks and appropriate mitigations.
☐	☐	☒	For grants exceeding US $5 million and the Grant Agent is an INGO: are there any significant risks regarding the capacity of the country office to perform the GA role that do not appear to be mitigated (e.g. through increased support from regional or HQ level, etc.)?	N/A since the grant is below US$ 5M and the GA is UNICEF.
☐	☒	☐	Does the proposal trigger any GPE policies (e.g., GPE Private Sector Policy) which would require extraordinary consultation with GPE governance structures?	The grant agent has verified that no private schools will be targeted.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☐ No ☒				

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

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): Alice Yang **Date** 5/31/2020

Completed by (Risk and Finance related questions as per *): Simon Hall and Ana **Date** 5/19/2020

Completed by (M & E related questions as per **): Gauri Khanduja **Date** 5/28/2020

Reviewed by (CL): Fazle Rabbani **Date** 6/8/2020

Reviewed by (QA): David Balwanz **Date** 6/6/2020

Reviewed by (Team Lead): Matthew Smith **Date** 6/8/2020

Approved by (jointly by QA and Team Lead if <$1m): n/a

Approved by (Manager 1 if >$1m and up to $10m): Margarita Focas Licht **Date** 6/9/2020

Approved by (Manager 2 if deemed necessary after risk-based review): n/a