MARSHALL ISLANDS - COVID-19 AF: Approval Memo to CEO

The application was virtually reviewed (no meeting) by: David Balwanz, Nilse Ryman, Daisuke Kanazawa, Anna-Maria Tammi, Simon Hall, Sissy Helguero Arandia, Yuri Borovsky and Arijeta Blakqori Mjekiqi.

1. **Grant Summary:** Even though COVID-19 has not yet become prevalent in Marshall Islands, in view of the particular vulnerability of small islands, the country has chosen to adopt a plan to enhance preparedness and resiliency, and to program GPE funding accordingly, which is consistent with the parameters of the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window. The GPE AF grant aims to support the implementation of the Republic of Marshall Islands Education Contingency Plan. The plan's objective is to support the continuation of quality and equity-based learning, while protecting the physical and mental well-being of students. The contingency plan focuses on four outcome areas: (1) safe and child friendly learning environment (2) learning continuity, (3) teacher support and (4) system strengthening. In the context of there being no reported cases of COVID-19 in Marshall Islands to date, GPE AF would support the country to prepare for three different scenarios: school closures / partial closures / schools fully reopened. Key components of the program are sustaining learning continuity (paper-based learning), protection and wellbeing, including safe school reopening, teacher training, and system strengthening. To prioritize equity and the most vulnerable populations, GPE AF will put special emphasis on children, teachers and communities in remote islands while covering some country-wide activities to support continuity of learning and system strengthening.

Country: Republic of the Marshall Islands		
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	UNICEF
e.	Agency Fee % + US$ amount	7 % and US$ 52,500
f.	Grant duration	18 months
g.	Expected Start Date	11/01/2020
h.	Expected End Date	04/30/2022

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.

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

3. **Decision:**

RECOMMENDED DECISION

[1] Includes US$97,500 for the cost of the grant agent to perform its roles and responsibilities

In line with the delegated authority granted by the Board of Directors, the GPE CEO approves the COVID-19 accelerated funding request for Republic of Marshall Islands in the amount of US$750,000 plus an additional US$52,000 in agency fees to UNICEF as Grant Agent. The grant has a start date of November 1, 2020, and an end date of April 30, 2022.

The GPE CEO recognized with appreciation the leadership and commitment of the Government of Republic of Marshall Islands 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 Secretariat 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) The program includes important investments in distance and remote learning, some of which may also be relevant to reaching primary and secondary school-aged children who are not in school, or who have previously dropped out. As the Program Document (PD) notes, children in remote areas, who are far from the nearest school, may be more likely to drop out. The Secretariat requests that government and country partners consider how distance learning approaches and monitoring activities can also reach and support children who have dropped out of school.

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: October 21, 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:			MARSHALL ISLANDS	
Grant Agent:			UNICEF	
Date of Submission:			Request submitted to GPE Secretariat:9/30/2020	
			Secretariat Review completed: 10/16/2020	
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. Recognising the urgent requirement of Accelerated Funding, as well as the history of support and continued assistance to the education sector by UNICEF, the Public School System (PSS) nominated UNICEF as grant agent. There is also a limited number of partners in the country: ADB, IOM, Red Cross. The GA was endorsed at the LEG meeting on May 15, 2020.
☒	☐	☐	Has the proposal been endorsed by the Local Education Group (and the Education Cluster where relevant)?	Yes. The strategic focus of the proposal was endorsed on September 23, 2020 at the Local Education Group (LEG) meeting chaired by PSS.
☒	☐	☐	Is the proposal based on a publicly available government response plan related to COVID-19, including education? *The proposal should explain where*	Yes, the proposal is based on the National Education Contingency Plan, finalized in September 2020. The

[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.

			and how the response plan has been made publicly available (e.g., Government website, distribution to key stakeholders, etc.).	plan can be found on the PSS website (https://pss.edu.mh/documents/reports/) under "Public School System Plans".
☒	☐	☐	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 program has a start date of November 1, 2020 and an implementation period of 18 months. (The cover note has an error, showing an end date of May 2022 instead of April 2022. The implementation plan is correct, with activities until April 2022.)
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) The program supports mainly primary, and includes some support to ECE and secondary levels. The program is designed with a focus on outer islands for equity and it covers 64 primary schools (some include ECE) and 2 secondary schools. The latter combine lower and upper secondary levels in combined boarding schools where students are living far from parents. Even though Marshall Islands has not yet achieved universal access to basic education, given the limited support to upper secondary (e.g., the program would support two secondary schools), and the fact that lower secondary and upper secondary are co-located in these schools, the inclusion of this support is deemed acceptable.[3] **Observation:** The program includes important investments in distance and remote learning, some of which may also be relevant to reaching primary and secondary school-aged children who are not in school, or who have previously dropped out. As the PD notes,

[3] Notably, support to LSE and USE combined schools include WASH facilities, training to school staff on safe schools and child well-being, and procurement of goods to produce distance learning materials which would support all 66 schools reachers by the project.

				children in remote areas, who are far from the nearest school, may be more likely to drop out. The Secretariat requests that government and country partners consider how distance learning approaches and monitoring activities can also reach and support children who have dropped out of school. (ii) Yes. Activities are fully aligned with the contingency plan. Public schools in Marshall Islands have not yet offered alternative modes of learning during the school closures/vacation as PSS was not ready for a sudden school closure. The proposed interventions support developing new distance learning approaches and strengthening of the system to prepare for three different scenarios: school closures / partial closures / schools fully reopened. Key components of the proposal are sustaining learning continuity (paper-based learning), protection and wellbeing, including safe school reopening, teacher training, and system strengthening. While PSS is preparing for an online learning option in the long-term, it was decided for equity reasons to provide paper-based materials at this point. (iii) Yes. The objective of the contingency plan is that "All girls and boys have continuous access and participate in high-quality education programmes before, during and after health-related emergencies." The results chain of the plan and proposal are the same, with the proposal showing clearly which outputs GPE funds are contributing to.
☒	☐	☐	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*	Yes. The program will directly reach 3,998 children (2,103 boys and 1895 girls), 480 teachers and an estimated 4,000 parents in remote areas. WASH

			targeting criteria to ensure equity (i.e., that interventions reach vulnerable populations).	activities are targeted to remote island schools which still do not have basic WASH facilities. Furthermore, as there are still areas in the country where there is no electricity and internet connectivity, a paper-based approach was considered the best option for an immediate distance learning modality. The program will include some national scale activities to contribute to the quality of distance learning and system strengthening, which will indirectly reach all children from ECE to secondary in the country – 14,260 students (7,646 males and 7,227 females). The program will ensure inclusion of ethnic minorities by translating paper-based material into Marshallese languages. The program proposes activities to support learning for children with disabilities. Under component 1, a safe school protocol will promote accessible facilities for children with disabilities. In component 2, support will be provided to teachers to improve learning opportunities for students with disabilities, including guidance for accommodating children with disabilities on formative learning assessments. The project will involve a public school system specialist on children with disabilities in developing the content of learning materials, as well as raising awareness.
☒	☐	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, identify and address specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19?	Yes. The program identifies increased gender-based domestic and community violence and abuse during extended periods of school closure. The program proposes to collect gender disaggregated data and include gender sensitive information through awareness-raising sessions. As part of the mitigation measures, the program will support teachers' capacity to recognize signs of violence and abuse, develop and share protocols on how to act when violence and abuse

				are identified. For cases of violence and abuse, helpline mechanisms will be established to ensure that reports are followed up with relevant professional support services.
☒	☐	☐	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 LEG will support the PSS to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the contingency plan, to which this program contributes. The proposal mentions that monitoring will be done in coordination with LEG members.
☒	☐	☐	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 notes that a wide range of partners are actively supporting the government response to COVID-19. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) supported the government in conducting awareness raising activities in schools about COVID-19 as well as a rapid assessment survey among households, the results of which were used in determining recipients of food baskets and relief support from the government. The Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) will be providing resource materials to support distance learning in further emergencies. (ii) Yes. The proposal shows clearly how GPE funded outputs fit into the overall contingency plan. ECW is not engaged in Marshall Islands.
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? *	Yes.
☒	☐	☐	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*	Yes. A fully detailed budget spreadsheet is provided which clearly explains component, activity and unit cost break-downs. The budget includes US$97,500 of

			*from program document, preferably in a spreadsheet format) **	GA support costs (13% of budget). Given the logistics of support across 14 islands and atolls, this higher than average cost is to be expected. Contingency costs of US$ 37,500 (5%) have been sufficiently justified by the GA and are within a range considered reasonable for the context.
☒	☐	☐	Is there a clear indication of the program's sources of funding, including which parts of the program are supported by each source? *	Yes. GPE funding is stand-alone and is intended to fund discrete activities within the govt.'s Covid 19 education response plan not covered by other govt. and donor funds.
☒	☐	☐	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. **	Yes. The budget components and activities align with those and the results framework presented in the programme document.
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?[4] Are roles and responsibilities clearly mapped? **	Yes, the M&E framework is costed and arrangements appear to be adequate. A monitoring plan, roles and responsibilities are included in the program.
☒	☐	☐	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. ***	Yes. The results framework includes key output and outcome indicators, baselines, targets, relevant disaggregation, frequency of reporting and means of verification.
☒	☐	☐	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? **	Yes. The results framework includes all required core indicators. Reporting arrangements are adequate.
☒	☐	☐	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) ***	Yes. A costed learning from evidence approach, based on the key principles of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, is present.

[4] 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 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. The proposal includes an implementation plan with a timeline. Roles are described sufficiently elsewhere.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently well-described to identify program management structures, responsible actors and processes?	Yes. The implementation, monitoring, and reporting will be done by the PSS with support from UNICEF and in coordination with LEG members. UNICEF will use different strategies to support implementation including the acquisition of technical assistance and services, partnership agreements with NGOs, and transfers of funds to the Education Ministry arrangements.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently described to determine flow of funds? *	Yes. UNICEF will receive and mange GPE funds. UNICEF's HACT procedures and controls will apply to disbursements and direct expenditure.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed financial management, auditing, and procurement arrangements clearly described and appropriate for the country context? *	Yes. UNICEF will be responsible for financial management and procurement through its global and established regional supply chain. Audit arrangements will be in accordance with HACT procedural requirements.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed sub-contracting arrangements clearly described and appropriate?	Yes. UNICEF will explore partnership agreements with PREL and IOM, including for training and development of safe school protocols.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation support and oversight arrangements by the grant agent well described?	Yes. UNICEF is responsible for ensuring that implementation is in line with the proposed interventions and for ensuring adequate monitoring and quality assurance of implementation. For monitoring, the national / existing monitoring system will be used as a primary source and as such education authorities from the PSS will hold ownership of systematic M&E. Additionally, UNICEF will directly

				monitor the status and progress of the activities through its institutional M&E structure. Regular program meetings with implementing partners are undertaken at the field level to assess progress made.
☒	☐	☐	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. UNICEF's emergency procurement procedures are available for rapid supply. UNICEF will use its existing staff on location, with additional support from its Pacific region office.
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?[5]	Yes. The proposal identifies the risk of increased (gender-based) domestic and community violence and abuse during extended periods of school closure. The proposed mitigation actions are (i) Capacity building of teachers to recognize signs of violence and abuse (ii) Develop and share protocols on how to act when violence and abuse are identified; and (iii) Establish helplines and/or other reporting mechanisms for violence and abuse.
☒	☐	☐	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. HACT procedures will be applied to manage fiduciary risks. GBV, child abuse and psychosocial wellbeing risks are identified as key risks in the risk matrix, with suitable mitigating actions planned. There are no civil works planned, so it is reasonable that no environmental risks are identified as key to the programme.
☐	☐	☒	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	n/a

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

			perform the GA role that do not appear to be mitigated (e.g. through increased support from regional or HQ level, etc.)?	
☐	☒	☐	Does the proposal trigger any GPE policies (e.g., GPE Private Sector Policy) which would require extraordinary consultation with GPE governance structures?	No. The Grant agent has confirmed that no GPE funds will support (i) for-profit schoolingdirectly and (ii) non-profit non state schools.
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** 10/01/2020

Completed by (Risk and Finance related questions as per *): Simon Hall **Date** 10/01/2020

Completed by (M & E related questions as per **) Sissy Helguero Arandia**:** **Date:** 09/30/2020

Reviewed by (CL): Daisuke Kanazawa **Date** 10/1/2020

Reviewed by (QA): David Balwanz **Date** 10/9/2020

Approved by (Reviewing Manager and Team Lead if <$1m): Nilse Ryman, David Balwanz **Date** 10/16/2020 and 10/9/2020