SAMOA - COVID-19 AF: Approval Memo to CEO

Review meeting participants: David Balwanz, Nilse Ryman, Daisuke Kanazawa, Ana A. Tobar, Sissy Helguero Arandia, Anna-Maria Tammi and Katherina Hruskovec Gonzalez.

Review meeting date: October 14, 2020

Date of proposal submission: 09/30/2020

1. **Grant Summary:** Even though COVID has not yet become prevalent in Samoa, the country has chosen to adopt a plan to enhance preparedness in view of the particular vulnerability of small islands, and has chosen to use GPE funding accordingly, which is consistent with the parameters of the COVID window. The GPE AF aims to support implementation of the Samoa Education Sector COVID 19 Response Plan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The Samoa Education Sector COVID 19 Response Plan has three main goals: (i) schools remain safe both from a physical and psychosocial point of view; (ii) all students, including those in vulnerable situations due to, for example, disability, remoteness or financial hardship**,** have access to continuing educational opportunities; and (iii) the education system is more resilient to future disruptions. For now, there have been no COVID-19 cases in Samoa and schools have been fully open since June. During school closure, schools distributed packages to students equivalent to 2-months of school workload. The government also made available educational television and radio broadcasting shows. Building on this foundation, the GPE AF program will support emergency planning and hygiene supplies for schools, as well as teacher training on psychosocial support. It will also support delivery of distance learning using different modalities (online, TV, radio, print), including procurement of laptops for teachers and radios for vulnerable households. Finally, the grant will support system resilience through development of guidelines and best practice in distance learning. The program will benefit all students with special attention to students from low socioeconomic background, living in remote locations and with special needs.

Country: Samoa		
a.	Accelerated Funding Covid-19 Allocation	US$ 1,000,000
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	11/1/2020
h.	Expected End Date	4/30/2022

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**

[1] Includes US$ 52,094 for the cost of the grant agent to perform its roles and responsibilities.

3. **Decision:**

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 Samoa in the amount of US$ 750,000 plus an additional US$ 52,500 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 Samoa 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 point of observation, which is a recommendation rather than requirement:

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 Secretariat positively recognizes the program's attention to supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of girls and boys – which can be especially important in a remote learning context. Program emphasis on improving teachers' monitoring of vulnerable students (to identify those who are not engaging or appear to be struggling due to different pressures at home) as well as cross cutting interventions provided though the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development and the Samoa Victim Support Agency to provide helpline support and emergency housing reflect the cross-cutting gender lens applied to the program and are well-noted.

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 30, 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:			SAMOA	
Grant Agent:			UNICEF	
Date of Submission:			Request submitted to GPE Secretariat: 9/30/2020	
			Secretariat Review completed: 10/21/2020	
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. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MESC) nominated UNICEF as the Grant Agent and this was endorsed by the Education Sector Advisory Committee (ESAC) at their meeting on August 14th, 2020. The GA clarified that ESAC national members include: the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture (MESC), the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD), the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL),

[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 Ministry of Public Enterprises (MPE), the Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA), the National University of Samoa (NUS), the Samoa Public Service Commission (PSC), and representatives from the Samoa Union of NGOs, the Congregational Christian Church, Mission Schools, and Private Schools. DPs who are also part of ESAC include: The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the World Bank. UNESCO and UNICEF (the GA) also participate actively in sector planning and implementation processes.[3]
☒	☐	☐	Has the proposal been endorsed by the Local Education Group (and the Education Cluster where relevant)?	Yes. In the same meeting where the GA was selected, the LEG also reviewed Samoa's Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan (SECRP) and a draft of this proposal. The proposal was fully endorsed on September 29, 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. Samoa initially developed the COVID-19 Basic Education Response Program (CBER) based on already existing strategies in the Education Sector Plan and Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. CBER was further elaborated into Samoa Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan (SESCRP) and consulted with ESAC and a wider range of stakeholders. SECRP is available on the MESC website: https://mesc.gov.ws/.
☒	☐	☐	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's start date is November 1, 2020 and its implementation period is 18 months.
The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐				

[3] In support of the development of a regional ESPIG (including neighboring Pacific Islands), Samoa has also been an active participant on the regional LEG.

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 activities of this proposal focus on the years of basic education described earlier as 8 years of primary education and 5 years of secondary. While the program includes support to upper secondary education, this is allowable within ESPIG Guidelines given the significant progress Samoa has made toward achieving universal primary education (n.b., GIR at grade 8 was above 100% in 2017). (ii) Yes. While no COVID-19 cases have been detected so far in Samoa. Samoa declared a state of emergency in late March, and closed schools and forbid gatherings of more than 5 people. Borders were also closed and will remain closed until New Zealand and Australia stop having active COVID-19 cases. Schools have reopened, some with an initial phased alternate day approach. They started opening in late May, with all schools fully open and operating normal hours in June. Before school closures, education staff received trainings on COVID-19 awareness and hygiene practices. Also, schools distributed packages equivalent to 2-months school workload. The government also made available educational television and radio broadcasting shows. In addition, the MESC website quickly posted indicative daily learning plans and suggested electronic resources and links to learning sites for those having internet connectivity at home. MOESC also reached an agreement with Digicel, so that students could improve their connectivity and download the materials from the MOESC site.

				Building on this foundation, the program will support emergency planning and hygiene supplies for schools, as well as teacher training on psychosocial support. It will also support delivery of distance learning using different modalities (online, TV, radio, print), including procurement of laptops for teachers and radios for vulnerable households. Finally, the grant will support system resilience through the development of guidelines and best practice in distance learning. (iii) Yes. The Program Document (page 9) presents the Theory of Change for the response plan and program. The overall objective is to ensure successful continuity of education for all children both now and in the future through three main goals: (i) Schools remain safe both from a physical and psychosocial point of view; (ii) All students, including those in vulnerable situations due to, for example, disability, remoteness or financial hardship, have access to continuing educational opportunities; and (iii) The education system is more resilient to future disruptions. The implementation of activities supporting the three main goals will be covered by GPE and other sources.
☒	☐	☐	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).*	Yes. The program document emphasizes that interventions will benefit all students with special attention to students from low socioeconomic background, living in remote locations and with special needs. The SESCRP proposes considerable investment in relevant MESC staff and teachers in how to use Moodle to create and upload their own lessons and resources. This will be included in this

				program. In Samoa, at least 90% of households have a mobile phone. All secondary and primary students have been given access to existing online learning resources through the provision, of a SIM card, one for every household and free internet access to relevant education sites. Under Goal 1, all government schools will benefit from WASH interventions, including facilities with resources adapted for students with special needs. Special consideration will be given to students with disabilities and families of these children. In addition, activities under this Goal prioritize Upolu and Savaii Districts. Under Goal 2, Open Distance Flexible Blended Learning (ODFBL) for TV, radio and print will pay special attention to the needs of students with disabilities and those in remote locations. Distance education materials will be accessible to children with disabilities through assistive technologies. TV courses will include subtitles and/or sign interpreters. Students with special needs will access adapted WASH school facilities, psychosocial support and access to protection services. To determine the 150 schools for laptop, current asset registers were utilized. The schools identified are predominantly on the island of Savaii and in more remote areas of Upolu. These schools are further from urban areas where there are lower levels of parental financial support and/or donations to schools of resources.

				The proposal mentions that there are approx. 5,000 households without a radio (and presumably no TV). The grant will procure radios for these households. The idea is to also make printed resources available to students, which teachers will download and print at their school. The grant finances printers for this activity.
☒	☐	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, identify and address specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19?	Yes. Risks of increased house chores, work in the plantation or caring for elderly or much younger extended family members are barriers to learning that both boys and girls face. Measures taken to mitigate such risks include a monitor and feedback system on distance learning as part of the teacher training program; this will consist of understanding the different pressures on students and identifying students struggling so that any underlying barrier can be identified and resolved. As clarified by the GA, risks that are particular to girls include that they may be left unattended, leading to peer pressure, physical and emotional wellbeing, and early pregnancy. The program proposes to work with the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development and in partnership with the Ministry of Health, to provide ongoing messaging and access support through a helpline. Further, for students, especially girls, victims of domestic violence, the program notes that the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) will work with the Samoa Victim Support agency to ensure that students are temporarily moved to an

				emergency housing facility so that they can receive support and access learning programs.
☒	☐	☐	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 Education Sector Advisory Committee (ESAC) has continued to provide strategic direction to the Education sector and to support the MESC in the development and implementation of both a program and a Response Plan aligned with the already existing Education Sector Plan. Initially, after ESAC decided that the initial focus of the COVID response should be on remote learning, relevant strategies and activities for COVID-19 response were extracted from the ESP and were developed into an Education Sector COVID-19 response matrix. This matrix outlined a program response for basic education (the COVID 19 Basic Education Response Program CBER) that was later presented to the National Emergency Organisation Committee (NEOC). This process was followed to ensure adequate alignment between COVID-19 Response Plan and the ESP and to contribute to the program's sustainability. The CBER was later developed into the Samoa Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan (SECRP) through consultation with ESAC and wider education sector stakeholders. ESAC endorsed the Response 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. Table 2 (Page 19 of the Program Document) presents the sources of funding for the SESCRP. Aside from the GPE COVID-19 AF, additional sources of funding include MFAT/DFAT and Government of Japan. The Government of Samoa will be contributing personnel and other operating costs, along with in-kind contributions or discounted rates for services provided by state-owned corporations.

				In addition, Vodafone and Digicel have also made in-kind contributions to the COVID response plan. (ii) Yes. Roughly half of the funding to support the implementation of SESCRP would come from GPE and DP funding (mainly MFAT/DFAT) for budget support and government education resources will complement GPE funds, as demonstrated in the budget document. In addition, the private sector and UNESCO have made additional in-kind contributions that are necessary for the implementation of SESCRP. ECW is not engaged in Samoa.
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. The proposed budget is consistent with revised allocation of US$ 750,000.
☒	☐	☐	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) *	Yes. The proposed budget outlines components, sub-components, and activities. Estimated unit costs and quantities are indicated. GA implementation support cost of US$52,094 represent 6.3% of the total amount.
☒	☐	☐	Is there a clear indication of the program's sources of funding, including which parts of the program are supported by each source? *	Yes. Other sources of funding are described in the program document. In addition, budget spreadsheet outlines other sources of funding for the Response Program.
☒	☐	☐	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. Budget assumptions are consistent with project description 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? [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 by gender and data sources.
☒	☐	☐	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 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 is present in output 3.4.
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. (Page 28-34 of the Program Document)
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently well-described to identify program management structures, responsible actors and processes?	Yes. Page 22 of the Program Document explains that the funds will be managed by the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Office, and specifically by the Education Program Section. All elements of program design, implementation, monitoring and reporting will be coordinated with the MESC in collaboration with UNICEF, drawing on relevant expertise within the UNICEF Pacific Education, WASH, Child Protection, Innovation, Emergency and M&E teams.

[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.

☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently described to determine flow of funds? *	Yes. UNICEF will receive and manage GPE funds. 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 follow HACT procedural requirements. These arrangements are well described in the program document and Annex 2.
☐	☐	☒	Are proposed sub-contracting arrangements clearly described and appropriate?	In follow up with the GA, it was confirmed that there are no sub-contracting arrangements intended for the implementation of GPE funds. All engagement of partners indicated in the proposal, either requires no funding (e.g. in the case of sharing experience with other education sector agencies on best practice with Moodle) or draws on other resources and arrangements with MESC (e.g. women's councils and church leaders).
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation support and oversight arrangements by the grant agent well described?	Yes. The Monitoring, evaluation and learning framework (Page 30) explains that, while the MESC will take the lead on standard program monitoring, UNICEF will conduct program visits and support monitoring through alternative modalities of M&E (e.g. phone survey, SMS, internet and low-tech tools, etc.), particularly where there are identified knowledge gaps and/or travel restrictions impede in-person visits).
☒	☐	☐	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 will utilize established in-country and regional resources. In addition, the risk assessment table indicates mitigation measures to allow rapid procurement.
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. An increase in bullying and even cyber-bullying has been identified as a potential risk. To mitigate it, teachers will participate in professional development sessions where strategies to target both bullying and e-learning bullying will be discussed. Furthermore, the GA also explained that MESC has also considered the additional risk of stronger peer pressure and higher early pregnancies posed to girls. This is due to large groups of youth being at home in the village, possibly without adequate levels of adult supervision. Although MESC has limited capacity to intervene, as these issues are dealt with at the village level, mitigation measures include making available a support helpline in partnership with the Ministry of Health.
☒	☐	☐	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. UNICEF's HACT procedures will be applied to manage fiduciary risks. The risk assessment also identifies fiduciary risks (procurement and risk of fraud) and appropriate mitigation measures are indicated. The GA has provided additional information to clarify the safeguards put in place to support safekeeping and maintenance of ICT equipment.
☐	☐	☒	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

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

☐	☒	☐	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 does not include direct support to for profit providers of core education services. The program does provide direct support to not-for-profit non state providers. Specifically, some activities associated with Goals 1 and 2 of the program will benefit ECE centers organized as not-for-profit, village-based centres managed by communities. These centres receive government funding monitored by the Ministry of Finance. MESC uses the same protocols to distribute and audit the funds to these ECE centres as they would for government schools. Government also meets the costs of teachers in these centres. The centres are governed by the 2009 Education Act that regulates and makes provision for school education and early childhood education in Samoa (Govt. of Samoa, 2009). Based on this information, this assessment confirms the presence of a regulatory framework for not for profit non state providers of core education services supported though this grant.
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): Katherina Hruskovec Gonzalez **Date** 10/06/2020

Completed by (Risk and Finance related questions as per *): Ana A. Tobar **Date** 10/02/2020

Completed by (M & E related questions as per **) Sissy Helguero Arandia **Date:** 10/02/2020

Reviewed by (CL): Daisuke Kanazawa **Date** 10/6/2020

Reviewed by (QA): David Balwanz **Date** 10/21/2020

Approved by (Reviewing Manager and Team Lead if <$1m): Nilse Ryman, David Balwanz **Date** 10/21/2020, 10/21/2020