SIERRA LEONE - COVID-19 AF: Approval Memo to CEO

Review meeting participants: Margarita Focas Licht, Matthew Smith, Plamen Danchev, Edward Davis, David Balwanz, Simon Hall & Ana Tobar Lozano, Gauri Khanduja and Alice Yang.

Review meeting date: June 1, 2020

Date of proposal submission: May 8, 2020

1. **Grant Summary:**

The GPE COVID-19 accelerated funding will co-finance the Free Education Project (FREE), to support the COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response and Recovery Plan for continued learning, recovery, and resilience in the education sector. The GPE COVID-19 funding will be implemented over an 18-month period ending in December 2021. The FREE, a five-year project, which is expected to be delivered in June 2020, will be financed by an IDA grant of US$50 million equivalent and US$16 million equivalent from U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and the European Union (EU) through a World Bank-administered multi-donor trust fund (MDTF). The proposed GPE COVID-19 funding will be covered under the FREE and will be supplementary to the ongoing education emergency response and can be leveraged to accelerate the development of the education sector. It will support the newly added Component 5 of the FREE which will have 4 sub-components. Sub-component 1 will support Information sharing and awareness raising under the COVID-19 Education Emergency Response. Sub-component 2 will support: (a) content development and delivery of a multi-modal distance learning program (physical learning materials, radio learning and online learning) for basic education; and (b) in-service teacher training for those in basic education. Sub-component 3 will work on three main streams: (a) safe school operations; (b) reach the most vulnerable; and (c) wellbeing and protection of schoolchildren. Finally, sub-component 4 will (a) evaluate immediate policy development priorities for school re-opening; (b) develop collaborative technology platforms; and (c) evaluate the education-response to COVID-19 initiatives.

2. **Key Information:**

Country: Sierra Leone		
a.	Accelerated Funding Covid-19 Allocation	US$ 10 million revised to US$ 7 million by GPE Board on May 29, 2020
b.	Allocation Requested (100%)	US$ 10,000,000
c.	**Allocation Recommended**	US$ 7,000,000[1]
d.	Grant Agent	World Bank
e.	Agency Fee % + US$ amount	1.75% and US$122,500
f.	Grant duration	18 months
g.	Expected Start Date	08/01/2020
h.	Expected End Date	01/31/2022

[1] Includes US$150,000 for the cost of the grant agent to perform its roles and responsibilities.

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:**

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 Sierra Leone in the amount of US$ 7,000,000 plus an additional US$ 122,500 in agency fees to World Bank as Grant Agent. The grant has a start date of August 1, 2020 and an end date of January 31, 2022.

The GPE CEO recognized with appreciation the leadership and commitment of the Government of Sierra Leone 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 Sierra Leone is now US$ 7,000,000, lower than the initial allocation and requested amount of US$ 10,000,000.

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 and reporting back to the Secretariat by June 29, 2020:

Request for Report Back

1. The Grant Agent is requested to provide a revised program document (including results framework and budget), to be sent after grant approval, following consultation with the LEG and agreement by the Government on the changes including the prioritization.

2. The updated program implementation plan should include the responsible party for each proposed activity.

3. The Secretariat positively noted the direct support to vulnerable populations. As prioritization of activities is done to reflect the reduced allocation, the Secretariat requests that sub-component 5.4 "MBSSE Immediate Policy Development Priorities for School Re-Opening" be reduced given that the current budget of US$529,950 is assessed as excessive.

4. Indicate and report on the number of schools that will be made safe for reopening through the US$ 1 million for WASH and US$ 1 million for disinfection under sub-component 5.3 "Safe School Reopening and Health and Safety of Students including the Most Vulnerable".

5. Report the number and % of beneficiaries for all core indicators as per GPE's M&E guidance for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window.

6. Develop a specific approach to including children with hearing impairment in continuity of learning programming that meets their learning needs.

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 grant effectiveness to facilitate the timely release of funds in support of program implementation.

b) Activities with clear and immediate impact on the continuation and safeguarding of education for vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 crisis be prioritized over activities that provide lesser immediate value for money for this purpose.

c) An appropriate reduction in implementation support costs given the lower overall budget.

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

Please note that although this proposal is treated as an additional financing to the Free Education Project (FREE), activities approved here by the GPE CEO are for COVID-19 related response and recovery. Therefore, none of the GPE Funds under Component 5 may be reprogrammed into other components in FREE without prior agreement from the GPE Secretariat. Also, if in an unlikely situation the parent program encounters delays, measures should be in place to ensure that the GPE supported COVID-19 Response Program continues to be implemented to the extent practicable.

Within the limitations mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Government and the Grant Agent may reprogram this grant, in consultation with the Local Education Group and where active the Education cluster, 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 nonminor revisions of ESPIG which can be found here: https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/policyeducation-sector-program-implementation-grants

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



Date: June 11, 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:			SIERRA LEONE	
Grant Agent:			World Bank	
Date of Submission:			Request submitted to GPE Secretariat: 5/8/2020	
			Secretariat Review completed: 6/4/2020	
Yes	No	N/A	**Eligibility**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the Country eligible for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding?	GPE Board approved originally on March 31, 2020 a US$ 10M maximum allocation which was subsequently revised on May 29, 2020 to US$ 7M.
☒	☐	☐	Is the grant agent accredited by GPE? *Please confirm via COVID-19 FAQ list.*	World Bank is the GA.
☒	☐	☐	Has GA selection followed a clear and transparent process, with the process documented in the proposal?[2]	The Ministry sent out a Request for Expressions of Interest (REoI) on April 15, 2020. Three organizations submitted EoIs: the World Bank, Save the Children UK, and UNESCO Commission, Sierra Leone. The EoI from UNESCO Commission did not meet the requirements set forth in the REoI. Both EoIs from the World Bank Team and Save the Children UK outlined strong evidence of managing projects/grants as well as experience with emergency response interventions. However, the World Bank's recent in-country experience in managing education projects and analytical

[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.

				work (especially the very successful REDiSL Projects), the development of the FREE Education Project and their record in working very closely with the Ministry, in the view of the Ministry, put them in a stronger stead to manage the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Funding. The LEG endorsed the selection of the World Bank as GA on May 6, 2020.
☒	☐	☐	Has the proposal been endorsed by the Local Education Group (and the Education Cluster where relevant)?	The Application was endorsed by the LEG on May 8, 2020 in a virtual e-meeting on Zoom, participated in also by the Technical Leads and the Strategic Coordination Committee of the COVID-19 Education Emergency Taskforce (EET).
☒	☐	☐	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 Quick Action Economic Response Program (QAERP) is online and the COVID-19 Education Emergency Response and Recovery Plan can be found on MBSSE's website: https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sierra-Leone-COVID19-Education-Response-Plan-PDF.pdf
☐	☒	☐	Will the program become effective within one month of GPE approval, with completion within 12-18 months from the date of program effectiveness?	The original proposal had a start date of June 1, 2020 and ending in 18 months on November 30, 2021. However, the start date was revised to August 1, 2020. The GPE COVID-19 component from the larger MDTF FREE program was removed at the last minute because the Grant Agent was going to lose US$ 50 million of World Bank funding if the program did not start by end June 2020. So the GPE COVID-19 grant will now be treated as additional financing to the FREE project, which requires further processing. Though it will only be formally effective by July 31,2020, and potentially by July 22, 2020, with the retroactive financing clause which will be present in this grant, activities taking place currently which are in line with the approved grant, can be funded from this grant. This will mitigate the delay in grant effectiveness. Decision language (observation): **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 grant effectiveness to**

				facilitate the timely release of funds in support of program implementation.
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) GPE funding is only allocated to basic education G1-G9. Other identified sources of funding will extend coverage to higher grades. (ii) Proposed activities are eligible but approx. $500,000 for policy development in component 5.4 are assessed as excessive and should be prioritized for cuts if savings are required. $1 million allocated each to WASH and school disinfection should indicate the number of schools that will be made safe. (iii) All components support program objectives and will support outputs and contribute to outcomes. While the main approach to learning continuity is radio-based distance learning, radio penetration/coverage is significantly lower for the most disadvantaged segments of the population. The program addresses this issue as follows: • For poor communities which can be reached by radio and television waves, but cannot afford the devices, the program provides radios and televisions; • For poor communities which cannot be reached by radio and television waves, the program provides print learning packets and pre-loaded tablets. • For children with disabilities, tablets with preloaded content adapted for specific forms of disabilities will be provided Suggested Decision Language: **The Secretariat positively noted the direct support to the vulnerable population. As prioritization of activities is done to reflect the reduced allocation, the Secretariat recommends that**

				sub-component 5.4 "MBSSE Immediate Policy Development Priorities for School Re-Opening" be reduced given that the current budget of US$529,950 is assessed as excessive. **Indicate and report on the number of schools that will be made safe for reopening through the US$ 1M for WASH and US$ 1M for disinfection under sub-component 5.3 "Safe School Reopening and Health and Safety of Students including the Most Vulnerable".**
☒	☐	☐	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).*	There is a strong focus on reaching the poor and those in rural areas. The project recognizes that persons with disabilities are often sidelined in risk communications. It proposes to make efforts to ensure that communications outreach campaigns are child-friendly, accessible to children with disabilities. GA has clarified how children with disabilities will be supported through a community approach though this could be stronger and more specific, for example with the provision of technology and additional resources, but it is there. More attention could be provided to the needs of hearing impaired students as radio is the main medium of continuity of learning. Proposed decision language: **Develop a specific approach to including children with hearing impairment in continuity of learning programming that meets their learning needs.**
☒	☐	☐	Does the program, to a sufficient degree, identify and address specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19?	It recognizes that girls may be left vulnerable and put at increased risk of teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation, child marriage, women and young girls may face greater expectations of caregiving for children and relatives at home instead of studying and teaching, and are more prone to domestic abuse without regular access to school, teachers, and other support systems in the community. It proposes to develop materials to carry out gender-focused activities such as outreach campaigns in collaboration with development partners and community

				outreach campaigns to support girls. It also includes activities to bring girls back to school after reopening and enable pregnant girls, dropped out young mothers to re-enter formal education. This includes, further, monitoring the situation when students come back to school (e.g. dropouts, gender-based violence, pregnancy, learning), through relevant data from the Annual School Census.
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal identify a relevant COVID-19 response coordination mechanism(s) and confirm that the program will be represented in this mechanism?	MBSSE established an Education Emergency Taskforce (EET) to advise and support the GoSL's education activities during COVID-19 as well as post COVID-19 period. The EET will specifically support coordination, planning and response. Continuous dialogue will be maintained with the education partners through the FREE implementation.
☒	☐	☐	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 GPE COVID-19 response will co-finance the Free Education Project (FREE), to support the COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response and Recovery Plan for continued learning, recovery, and resilience in the education sector. The FREE, a five-year project, will be financed by an IDA grant of US$50 million equivalent and US$16 million equivalent from DFID, Irish Aid and the EU through a World Bank-administered multi-donor trust fund (MDTF). The proposed GPE COVID-19 Education Emergency Response funding will be covered under the FREE and will be supplementary to the ongoing education emergency response (p.4). The World Bank will ensure alignment with partners' activities and involvement of key stakeholders as appropriate, and close coordination with other partners to leverage resources, ensure coordination of efforts, and avoid duplication. Annex 1 of the proposal presents the list of development partners' interventions and committed funding.
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 US$10 million and is consistent with the original GPE Board Approved maximum

				allocation for Sierra Leone, but as per above, the revised allocation of US$7 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) **	The budget outlines component, sub-component, activity and GA's supervision costs. Budget also indicates unit costs or quantities which are deemed adequate. GA's supervision costs are $150,000, which are acceptable and within the supervision allocation range for a budget of $10 million in a non-fragile state.
☒	☐	☐	Is there a clear indication of the program's sources of funding, including which parts of the program are supported by each source? *	The proposal presents a table listing funding from other donors and the focal areas to be funded.
☒	☐	☐	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 is consistent with the proposal. Budget assumptions align with program design.
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 Results Framework, presented in table 2 outlines responsibilities for data collection.
☒	☐	☐	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 Results Framework, presented in table 2, includes results indicators, Indicator definitions, baselines and target values, data source methodology.
☐	☒	☐	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 following core indicator should be presented as number and % of schools in program area: 1) Number of schools equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19 [cumulative]

[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.

				Recommended decision language: **Report the number and % of beneficiaries for all core indicators as per GPE's M&E guidance for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window.** After this is complied with, then this section overall will have met the program standards.
☒	☐	☐	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 proposal includes learning from evidence approach in the revised proposal under the monitoring and evaluation section. Further, activities and costs related to this have been included under sub-component 5.4 as well.
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?	An implementation plan is found in Annex 2. It is missing roles and responsibilities. Proposed decision language: **The updated program implementation plan should include the responsible party for each proposed activity.** Once this is addressed, the standards will be met.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently well-described to identify program management structures, responsible actors and processes?	The MBSSE will be responsible for the overall implementation, prompt and efficient coordination, oversight and monitoring of the FREE activities. The MBSSE will have a dedicated Free Education Project Secretariat that will be responsible for day-to-day project management and coordination, oversee project activities, and be paid by the FREE.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements are sufficiently described to determine flow of funds? *	Flow of funds arrangements, including designated accounts, disbursement arrangements and mitigations of risks of delay are adequately described in Annex 3.

☒	☐	☐	Are proposed financial management, auditing, and procurement arrangements clearly described and appropriate for the country context? *	Financial management and procurement arrangements are adequately described. The MoF's PFMU will work closely with the FREE Secretariat for fiduciary arrangements. The PFMU is responsible for the day-to-day FM and procurement functions of the FREE. External and internal audit arrangements as described in Annex 3 appear appropriate for the context.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed sub-contracting arrangements clearly described and appropriate?	The proposed procurement approach prioritizes fast track emergency procurement for the required goods, works and services. Key measures to fast track procurement include use of simple and fast procurement and selection methods, shorter biding time for tenders approaching national market, use of existing framework agreements, including existing ones, procurement from UN Agencies, advance contracting force account, increased thresholds for request for quotation (RFQ) and national procurement, no prior review for emergency procurement, use of NGO where appropriate to provide technical assistance. The World Bank will provide procurement hands-on expanded implementation support.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation support and oversight arrangements by the grant agent well described?	The World Bank as a Grant Agent, jointly with the MDTF-participating development partners, will provide implementation support and supervision, including fiduciary and safeguards oversight during project implementation. The World Bank's Anticorruption Guidelines apply to this operation. Sections of these guidelines, especially those relating to conflict of interest, procurement and contract administration monitoring procedures, procedures undertaken for replenishing the DA, and use of the project's assets, will be provided as an annex to the project's Financial Procedures Manual.
☒	☐	☐	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? *	Existing arrangements in place for FREE will be used. Designated procurement specialist(s) and FM specialist(s) will be recruited. Under Component 5, the proposed procurement approach prioritizes fast track emergency procurement for the required emergency goods, works and services.

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]	Risk in terms of equity among urban and rural students, students from low income households, children with disabilities and other marginalized groups is discussed in the proposal. In particular, there is a dedicated section on disability inclusion and another on gender and gender-based violence (p.11). The proposal also covers risks of teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation, child marriage and other dangers and the risk of dropout especially for girls and vulnerable children.
☒	☐	☐	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? *	Fiduciary risk is assessed as *High*. The GA's recent assessment of the PFMU opined that it has satisfactory planning and budgeting, accounting, internal controls, financial reporting, and external auditing processes in place that will support the effective and efficient use of resources. The procurement arrangements described, including GA oversight, are in mitigation of implicit risks. Safeguarding of children is an element of Component 5. There are no civil works planned, so environmental risk is reasonably not assessed as a key risk.
☐	☐	☒	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?	The grant will benefit only government public schools. Private schools, and community schools/NGO schools are not mentioned in the program document.
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** 5/29/2020

Completed by (Risk and Finance related questions as per *): Simon Hall & Ana Tobar Lozano **Date** 18/05/2020

Completed by (M & E related questions as per **): Gauri Khanduja **Date** 5/18/2020

Reviewed by (CL): Plamen Danchev **Date** 06/01/2020

Reviewed by (QA): Ed Davis **Date** 5/29/2020

Reviewed by (Team Lead): Matthew Smith **Date** 6/5/2020

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

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

Approved by (Manager 2 if >$10m): n/a