MALDIVES - COVID-19 AF: Approval Memo to CEO

Review meeting participants: Matthew Smith, David Balwanz, Muhammad Tariq Khan, Javier Luque, Anne Joncheray, Ana A. Tobar, Gauri Khanduja and Anna-Maria Tammi.

Review meeting date: July 8, 2020

Date of proposal submission: June 24, 2020

1. **Grant Summary:** The GPE funding will support Maldives in the implementation of the country's Education Response Plan for COVID-19, which was developed with support from GPE and UNICEF. In the case of Maldives, an upper middle-income country with an education system spanning an archipelago, the pandemic has shown that there is a need to build on the existing system for remote/distance learning solutions. Through the proposed program, the GPE grant will support the country in continued learning, recovery and resilience in school education. To ensure continuity of education during the pandemic, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched a dual mode of teaching and learning - online classes and telecasted lessons via television. All students, except grades 1 and 2, were provided with Android Tablets and arrangements were made for students and teachers to receive mobile data packages to ensure access to internet. GPE's support will enable the MoE to sustain this innovative distance learning program (through the combination of TV and online learning, including provision of laptops to schools) to improve the quality of learning as well as providing a more cost-effective approach to education access in remote islands. A key element of the proposed approach is upskilling teachers and furthering their ability to create new online content and access online learning systems for engaging with students. Through the GPE grant, the country will undertake in-service teacher training on the use of digital tools – which will support immediate and medium-term educational objectives. GPE funding will complement activities of government and support from other development partners – including support from WHO on WASH and hygiene and the Government of Japan. The program will also complement the recently approved GPE funded Learning Advancement and Measurement Project (LAMP) under the Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) – which supports strengthening of early grades instruction, inclusive education, teacher professional development and learning assessment.

2. **Key Information:**

Country: Maldives		
a.	Accelerated Funding Covid-19 Allocation	US$ 750,000 (revised from US$ 1M to US$ 750,000 by GPE Board on May 29, 2020)
b.	Allocation Requested (100%)	US$ 750,000
c.	Allocation Recommended	US$ 750,000[1]
d.	Grant Agent	UNICEF
e.	Agency Fee % + US$ amount	7% (US$ 52,500)
f.	Grant duration	17.5 months
g.	Expected Start Date	7/14/2020
h.	Expected End Date	12/31/2021

[1] UNICEF Maldives will not charge for implementation support costs, which will be covered from its own resources.

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 Maldives 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 (DATE OF CEO APPROVAL LETTER), and an end date of 31 December 2021.

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

Recognizing the GPE Board's intent to proceed with the COVID-19 funding on a timeline which acknowledges the COVID-19 emergency, the Government and Grant Agent are asked to move forward with implementation immediately while addressing the following points and reporting back to the Secretariat by July 31, 2020:

Request for Report-Back

1. GPE guidelines do not allow grant financing to provide direct support to for-profit provision of education services. Please remove any support to students attending for-profit schools from the program document. GPE guidelines do allow grant financing to support not-for-profit non-public provision of education, provided that there is a government regulatory framework in place. If students benefitting from the internet access dongles are attending not-for-profit non-public schools, please confirm the existence of a government regulatory framework for these schools. If a regulatory framework does not exist, please remove support for these students from the program.

2. Please ensure that the agency fee is consistent with the standard UNICEF agreed rate of 7%.

3. The Grant Agent is requested to include baselines in the results framework and revise the wording of the indicators to clearly outline the different characteristics by which the indicator will be disaggregated. The Grant Agent is also requested to include core indicators 1 & 3 from Table 1 of GPE's M&E guidance.

The Secretariat also raises the following point of observation, which is a recommendation rather than a 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.

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: July 14, 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:			MALDIVES	
Grant Agent:			UNICEF	
Date of Submission:			Request submitted to GPE Secretariat: 6/24/2020	
			Secretariat Review completed: 7/9/2020	
Yes	No	N/A	**Eligibility**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the Country eligible for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding?	Yes. Board allocation as per 29 May 2020 Board decision is US$ 750,000.
☒	☐	☐	Is the grant agent accredited by GPE? *Please confirm via COVID-19 FAQ list.*	Yes. UNICEF is Grant Agent.
☒	☐	☐	Has GA selection followed a clear and transparent process, with the process documented in the proposal?[2]	Yes. MoE proposed UNICEF as the Grant Agent, which was endorsed by the National Education Consultation Committee (NECC) serving as LEG on April 22. Meeting minutes are attached to the application.
☒	☐	☐	Has the proposal been endorsed by the Local Education Group (and the Education Cluster where relevant)?	Yes, the application was endorsed by the NECC on June 22. Meeting minutes were shared with the application.
☒	☐	☐	Is the proposal based on a publicly available government response plan related to COVID-19, including education? *The proposal should explain*	Yes. The application is based on the Maldives Education Response Plan for COVID-19, which was developed with support from GPE's COVID-19 ESPDG funds. The plan is available on the MoE website. The contents of the plan were also described in an article

[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.

			where and how the response plan has been made publicly available (e.g., Government website, distribution to key stakeholders, etc.).	in one of the Maldives' leading newspapers on June 26th 2020, accessible in print form and online.
☒	☐	☐	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 proposed start date is July 14, 2020, with an implementation period of 17.5 months.
	The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐			
Yes	No	N/A	**Program Design & Coordination**	
☒	☐	☐	Are proposal activities (i) supporting basic education only, (ii) within the boundary of eligible activities under this funding window (see COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Guidelines, which focus on recovery and mitigation), or, if not within the boundary, are from the government response plan and well-justified, and (iii) likely to support program objectives / progress toward expected outputs and intermediate outcomes?	(i) This standard is met. The proposal supports activities from pre-primary to Grade 12. The majority of proposed activities do not imply any additional cost for extending support to upper secondary grades (e.g. a webinar training for all teachers on the use of ICT). Out of the laptops that will be provided to 212 schools, two schools are upper secondary schools. This modest support to upper secondary education in the context of the Maldives is acceptable vis-à-vis GPE guidance as Maldives has a high level of primary completion. (ii) Yes. Activities are aligned with the COVID-19 response plan and are within the boundary of eligible activities under the COVID-19 funding window. Maldives is an upper middle-income country and the interventions are considered appropriate in this archipelago context where the government has already invested significantly in distance learning approaches that are well articulated in an overall vision and plan. The proposal supports further developing of distance learning, remedial education, as well as policy reform around the use of ICT in education. Most of the program budget supports the component on distance learning, which would involve sustaining TV and online learning that have already been launched by MoE. *This approach is considered in a context where government and other partners are responding to other aspects of the COVID-19 response (see below).* The program would establish a resource pool of 420 laptops, to be distributed on an equity-basis among 212 government schools (amounting to 56% of the budget). The laptops will be used for a range of activities including enabling teachers who must quarantine to deliver lessons online, integration of ICT into lessons, and enabling teachers to complete professional development training online. These efforts strengthen support to learning continuity, as well as plans to transition to an increased reliance on online approaches over the medium term. All students, except grades 1 and

				2, have already been provided with Android Tablets, and the laptops would allow teachers to improve the quality of distance learning. Safeguards around maintaining the equipment have been outlined in the proposal and will follow the same arrangement currently used for the tablets distributed to students and teachers. Recurring costs, including service and repair costs, would be met through domestic funds. Access to online learning for disadvantaged children has been considered and is described in the relevant section below. (iii) Yes. The overall goal of the Maldives ERP for COVID-19 is to minimize the loss of learning for students, while simultaneously preventing the spread of COVID-19 from schools into local communities. The program's activities support the overall goal by sustaining distance learning and supporting remedial learning. Government and other partners are supporting other activities included in the response plan: Maldives has received in-kind supplies from WHO for WASH stations and for disinfection and cleaning of schools. Japan has also supported procurement of medical equipment for the education sector (roughly US$ 500,000). The pandemic has impacted the provision of free breakfast for students, which was halted due to school closures. As a precaution against the spread of COVID-19, MoE recommended to put the feeding program on hold until the end of 2020. There had also been earlier calls to review the program and its targeting. MoE is considering alternative options with the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services (MoGFSS), including take-home rations. Maldives has received food aid during the COVID pandemic from India and IsDB.
☒	☐	☐	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 distance learning interventions will combine online learning with low-tech (TV). To make online learning accessible for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, a Wi-Fi dongle will be provided to 1,500 students to ensure that they have uninterrupted access to learning. All students (except grades 1 and 2) have been already been provided with a tablet with Google-suite installed. The MoE is identifying the 1,500 students through triangulating information from the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and the MoE itself. Laptops will be distributed according to a set of needs-based criteria, including teacher to laptop ratios. Any school with a ratio of fewer than 10 teachers per laptop will not be eligible to receive a laptop. The proposal recognizes that learning gaps for children with special needs and disabilities will be further exacerbated due to the pandemic. Specifically, it plans to build

				mechanisms to track children who may be at risk of dropping out or disengaging in learning due to lack of access to distance learning modes. In addition, the individual education plan-based modality utilized in developing the remedial class will address the needs of individual students, thereby providing additional support for SEN students. Psychosocial support is facilitated though the program and is also expected to be supported by the GA through its own funding.
☒	☐	☐	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 adolescent girls at high risk of drop out and mentions that a mechanism will be in place to track them. The program would support remedial education following the reopening of schools for disadvantaged children, including girls. ICT-based materials and teacher training modules produced under the program will take into account gender-sensitivity and mainstreaming. Beyond the scope of this program MoE is working with the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services (MoGFSS), Maldives Police Service and UNICEF to monitor and counter the exploitation of girls as a result of the COVID pandemic. Interventions relevant to the GPE grant application include mitigating the risk of online grooming by educating children and parents on internet safety, with the support of UNICEF and a local NGO.
☒	☐	☐	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 COVID-19 Education Response Task Force already set up in the MoE will be transformed into the COVID-19 Education Response Oversight Committee with additional members including from the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Higher Education, and UNICEF.
☒	☐	☐	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. Information on sources of financing for the COVID response is publicly available at https://www.finance.gov.mv/covid-19/government-finances/financial-assistance. Support to the education sector includes funding from UNICEF, Japan, and WHO and is noted in the application. (ii) n/a. ECW is not engaged in Maldives.
	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, partially. Proposed budget is consistent with the revised GPE Board approved allocation for Maldives. Agency fees are indicated as US$ 60,000 which represents 8% of the approved allocation. This percentage is not in line with UNICEF's standard agency fee rate of 7%**.** Recommended decision language: **Please ensure that the agency fee is consistent with the standard UNICEF agreed rate of 7%.**
☒	☐	☐	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) **	Proposed budget is structured per component, sub-component, and activity. Budget assumptions including estimated unit costs and quantities are clearly indicated. Units costs deemed reasonable. UNICEF Maldives will not charge for implementation support costs, which will be covered from its own resources.
☒	☐	☐	Is there a clear indication of the program's sources of funding, including which parts of the program are supported by each source? *	Proposal clearly indicates sources of funding supporting the Emergency Response Plan. Annex 1 presents other sources of funding, committed amounts, programme areas and activities 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. **	The budget assumptions aligned with other parts of the proposal including the results framework.
	The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐			
Yes	No	N/A	**M & E and Results Framework**	
☒	☐	☐	Is the proposed M & E framework costed and likely to support effective monitoring of program implementation and results reporting? [3] Are roles and responsibilities clearly mapped? **	Yes, the results framework and section 4 of the proposal outline roles and responsibilities.

[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.

☐	☒	☐	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 outlines indicators, sources, target and responsibilities. It does not include baseline. While it seems that the results framework includes disaggregation, it would be helpful to revise the language to clearly indicate this. For instance, revise the current indicator 2 "(Core) Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the programme area) supported with the remedial programme, level of education, geographical distribution, gender, disabilities, vulnerability." to "(Core) Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the programme area) supported with the remedial programme ***disaggregated by the*** level of education, geographical distribution, gender, disabilities, vulnerability. Recommended decision language: **The Grant Agent is requested to include baselines in the results framework and revise the wording of the indicators to clearly outline the different characteristics by which the indicator will be disaggregated.** The standard will be addressed to Secretariat satisfaction following the implementation of this decision language.
☐	☒	☐	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 indicators must be included in the results framework and disaggregated by gender. 1) (Core) Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) in the program area supported with distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs 2) (Core) Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) provided access to programs and sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure like psychological impacts, gender-based violence, and issues related to unequal social norms Recommended decision language: **The Grant Agent is requested to include core indicators 1 & 3 from Table 1 of GPE's M&E guidance.** The standard will be addressed to Secretariat satisfaction following the implementation of this decision language.

☒	☐	☐	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 a learning from evidence approach, an activity line for an evaluation is a part of the budget and other monitoring costs related to monitoring function will be covered by UNICEF Maldives.
	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 activities and timeline clearly outlined. Table 2 outlines responsibilities for each activity.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements sufficiently well-described to identify program management structures, responsible actors and processes?	Yes. The project will be implemented by the MoE and its departments with the support of several partners. The Policy Planning and Research Division (PPRD) of the MoE will oversee project implementation. The procurement unit of the MoE will take the responsibility of procuring any supplies and materials required for the procurement. The leads for each activity within the MoE are listed in Table 2 of the proposal. The implementing departments will submit their reports on a fortnightly basis to PPRD via the national EMIS.
☒	☐	☐	Are implementation arrangements are sufficiently described to determine flow of funds? *	Yes. The program document indicates that GPE funding will be administered by UNICEF and operated through the MoE financial systems, which have strong financial management and controls systems in-place.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed financial management, auditing, and procurement arrangements clearly described and appropriate for the country context? *	Yes. As the GA, UNICEF is responsible for the management of the grant as well as FM. GPE funding will be managed as per the UNICEF financial rules and regulations. The GA provided details on the HACT procedures and how these will be rolled out in the context of COVID-19 (i.e. programme assurance visits via phone, email and online due to travel restrictions, spot checks and audits, etc.). The GA indicated that the Auditor General's Office of Maldives will undertake an annual audit.
☒	☐	☐	Are proposed sub-contracting arrangements clearly described and appropriate?	Yes. The MoE will procure supplies as per established procedures with UNICEF. The MoE has a long history of working with UNICEF and has in the past procured supplies following their guidelines. All items will be purchased locally and are available at the time of submitting the proposal.

☒	☐	☐	Are implementation support and oversight arrangements by the grant agent well described?	Yes. Where funds are to be utilized through the MoE, UNICEF will assist to ensure that implementation of activities are in line with the plans by conducting rigorous and regular monitoring of the project activities. UNICEF will collect data from the national EMIS and engage on a fortnightly basis initially, and on a monthly basis later, to monitor the progress of the project and the response plan as a whole. The Policy Planning and Research Division of the MoE will take the lead role in monitoring the specific activities of the implementation plan under the overall monitoring of the national response plan. Review meetings will be coordinated and convened by the PPRD. Under the guidance of the COVID-19 Education Response Oversight Committee, a comprehensive biannual review will be organized.
☒	☐	☐	Does the proposal ensure implementation arrangements will be in place to ensure rapid start-up? Specifically, will fiduciary and administrative arrangements allow for disbursement by the proposed start date? Will major interventions will be ready to be launched by the proposed start date? *	Yes. The GA confirmed that implementation arrangements will be in place to ensure rapid start-up of the project, indicating that single source procurement will be used for low value procurements (i.e. all procurements in the project with the exception of the 420 laptops) to expedite implementation under the special rules for the COVID-19 emergency. The GA also listed the different actions already undertaken to fast track implementation (e.g. specifications of equipment shared, quotes requested, suppliers informed of upcoming tenders, etc.).
	The section meets GPE's COVID-AF requirements: Yes ☒ No ☐			
Yes	No	N/A	**Risk Assessment and Mitigation**	
☒	☐	☐	Are risks / insecurity that could threaten any vulnerable population (e.g. girls, displaced children) identified, with mitigation actions proposed?[4]	Yes. The risk of learning loss is identified for children with special needs and at-risk students. The program will directly respond to their needs by providing multiple modalities of teaching and learning.
☒	☐	☐	Are risks related to fiduciary arrangements, including financial management, procurement, governance, and safeguards issues (harm to people or the environment) and adequate mitigation actions are identified? *	Yes. UNICEF's responsibility for the grant's financial management is a mitigating factor, in particular the fact the funds will be managed as per the UNICEF financial rules and regulations (HACT procedures). While no separate FM risk assessment was provided, the GA indicated that a macro assessment was conducted by UNICEF in 2015 and confirmed the robustness of the national audit system while a micro assessment was conducted for MoE in December 2016 and concluded an overall low risk rating for the

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

				implementing partners. These elements are deemed sufficient for the amount of the grant.
☐	☐	☒	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 GPE funded program would support children, teachers, and principals in government schools, private schools and community schools. However, the direct support from the program will be focused only to government schools. The support to private schools and community schools is indirect, in that they will be able to benefit from webinars/guidance that would be developed anyway for government schools. Due to the targeting criteria it is possible that some of the 1,500 students who would benefit from the free Wi-Fi dongle could be students in community/non-government schools. Currently up to 100 dongles are planned to be provided to students enrolled in private schools (see decision language below). Recommended decision language: • **GPE guidelines do not allow grant financing to provide direct support to for-profit provision of education services. Please remove any support to students attending for-profit schools from the program document.** • **GPE guidelines do allow grant financing to support not-for-profit non-public provision of education, provided that there is a government regulatory framework in place. If students benefitting from internet access dongles are attending not-for-profit non-public schools, please confirm the existence of a government regulatory framework for these schools. If a regulatory framework does not exist, please remove support for these students from the program.**
	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:** 6/24/2020

Completed by (Risk and Finance related questions as per *): Anne Joncheray and Ana A. Tobar **Date:** 7/7/2020

Completed by (M & E related questions as per **): Gauri Khanduja **Date:** 6/26/2020

Reviewed by (CL): Muhammad Tariq Khan **Date:** 7/9/2020

Reviewed by (QA): David Balwanz **Date:** 7/9/2020

Reviewed by (Team Lead): Matthew Smith **Date:** 7/9/2020

Approved by (jointly by QA and Team Lead if <$1m): David Balwanz and Matthew Smith **Date:** 7/9/2020

Approved by (Manager 1 if >$1m and up to $10m): n/a