CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE: AUGUST 23, 2022

TO: Charles North, Acting CEO		
FROM: Nilse Ryman, CEP Regional Manager; Javier Luque, Country Team Lead; Sven Baeten, Grant Operations Team Lead; David Balwanz, Quality Assurance Team; and Anthony Fifi Bentil, Risk and Finance Team.		
SUBJECT: Approval of an Education Sector Program Implementation Grant for Afghanistan		
Country: Afghanistan	**Grant Agent:** UNICEF	**Start Date:** 10/01/2022
Grant Type: ESPIG	**Agency fee % (+US$ amount):** US$ 700,000	**Original End Date:** 07/31/2023
Amount: US$10,000,000	**Grant duration:** 10 months	**New End Date:** -
Current Disbursement: Not Applicable		

Action request

- Cancel uncommitted grant funds in the amount of US$ 10 million from the previous (cancelled) Education Sector Program Implementation Grant with the World Bank as grant agent
- Approve the program request for financing textbooks activities in Afghanistan through an ESPIG grant.

Request Summary

The proposed grant will co-finance the completion of the *thirty eight million textbooks project*. This multi-donor financed project was conceived in 2020, in response to the increasing needs for textbooks in the classroom, and this activity was also part of the previous ESPIG grant supervised by the World Bank, which was cancelled by the grant agent due to the Taliban takeover. The development partner group wants to prioritize GPE funding to complete the project and ensure the delivery of 38 million textbooks to 14,863 schools, benefitting around 4,9 million children and 56 thousand teachers1 per year in the coming three years. At the same time, UNICEF will ensure adequate monitoring of both the delivery in schools and the use of these resources in classrooms.

The support requested from GPE aims to complete printing and distribution of all books under the textbooks project, that came to a halt in August 2021 due to lack of funding. GPE support will help to fill a financing gap of US $10 million, with the GA securing funding from other sources to ensure the final 13,2 million textbooks are printed and effectively distributed. The expected outcome of the project is that all public schools have adequate textbooks for grade 1-12, for all subjects, under the existing (pre-takeover) curriculum. Completing the project will ensure the delivery of all 38

[1] The lifespan of a book is expected to be three years. The books are collected at the end of the schoolyear to be used again the next year with new cohort of students. The project aims to reach 60% of all children in public schools. The remainder of the students will do with textbooks, distributed in previous years, or by sharing with children that receive the textbooks.

million textbooks to schools across Afghanistan by the end of the calendar year 2022, in time for the next school year starting 23rd of March 2023.

Partners at the Development Partner Group support the textbook project as they included the distribution of textbooks in the Afghanistan Educations Sector Transitional Framework. Moreover, they identified the distribution of textbooks as a priority intervention to be financed by GPE resources in the Doha DPG meeting (in June 2022) and endorsed the formal proposal application once prepared by the GA.

Current Portfolio

Afghanistan currently has two active GPE grants.

Grant	Amount in US$	Grant Agent	Closing date	Notes
ESPIG	125,000,000	World Bank	Cancelled in 2022	Grant implementation was halted by the GA after the Taliban takeover. The GA has cancelled the program and has returned uncommitted funds to GPE.
Accelerated Funding	21,920,561	UNICEF	12/31/2022	The initial grant amount was US$20,000,000. The grant was extended by 9 months and received additional amount of US$1,920,561 in March 2022.

Afghanistan also received a COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grant of US$ 11 million approved in June 2020 which was managed by UNICEF and was closed in December 2021.

Eligibility Criteria

Since the activity endorsed by the DPG has national scope and does not specifically target the children most affected by the crisis required for Accelerated Funding eligibility, the proposal is better qualified for an ESPIG grant funding. The cancellation of the US$ 10 mln part of the previous (cancelled) ESPIG implemented by the World Bank can provide the source of funding for the requested program. This ensures funding is available, and as an ESPIG revision, no other eligibility criteria apply.

Significant Opportunities: This request would facilitate the continuity of teaching and learning to maintain the content of the existing (pre-Taliban) curriculum. It is complementary to other crucial inputs to the education sector to ensure public system remains functional and children, including secondary education girls, have the opportunity to continue learning. Without continued support to the public education system, millions of children are at risk of dropping out and becoming out-of-school children.

Significant Issues and Risks

The Development Partner Group (DPG) had raised and discussed potential risks with UNICEF, specifically the risks of negotiating textbook storage and delivery to girls' secondary schools. DPG has requested these risks to be raised and highlighted to GPE prior to sign off and recommended that an indicator on whether textbooks have adequately reached adolescent girls becomes a key indicator in UNICEF's reporting on the project. To respond to the distribution concern, UNICEF has been negotiating several options with the Ministry of Education to support out of school secondary-school age girls with textbooks so that they may remain engaged in their learning. UNICEF has proposed several mitigation measures to address the risk of textbooks not reaching the girls (see Annex 1, email from UNICEF to DPG from August 9, 2022), and has envisioned the vigorous monitoring process of the textbook delivery based on the UNICEF field spot-checks and third party monitoring. Moreover, in some areas to receive textbooks, there are reports of attendance of girls to secondary schools (full attendance in the North, partial attendance in the center). In terms of reporting, the proposed report-back is in line with GPE guidance on gender disaggregated indicator reporting and responds to the DPG concern.

Recommendation

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that it recommends CEO approval of US$ 10,000,000 for Afghanistan's ESPIG with UNICEF as the grant agent with one report-back requirement.

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: ESPIG
Country: Afghanistan

CEO/2022/08-XX–XXXX Allocation for Afghanistan funding request. The CEO, in his delegated authority from the Board of Directors:

- Cancels uncommitted grant funds in the amount of US$ 10 million from the previous Education Sector Program Implementation Grant with the World Bank as grant agent
- and approves a corresponding amount of US$10 mln for a new ESPIG with UNICEF as grant agent, plus an additional US$ 700,000 in agency fees.
- Requests the Secretariat to include in its notification of approval to Afghanistan the following report-back requirement:

Annex A – Observations and Report Backs

Afghanistan	
Report-Back	In the final report the GA is requested to provide quantitative and qualitative data on the extent to which boys, girls' and mixed schools, inclusive of girls'

	secondary schools, regardless if classes are in session, received and benefitted from the 38 million textbooks provided by the overarching program.

Date: September 23, 2022



Charles North, Acting CEO