CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE: 11/17/2023

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO		
FROM: Nilse Ryman, CEP Regional Manager; Kirsten Majgaard, Quality Assurance Team Lead; Sven Baeten, Grant Operations Team Lead		
SUBJECT: Approval of Vietnam's Multiplier grant		
Country: Vietnam	**Grant Agent:** Save the Children Italia ETS	**Co-financing [if applicable]:** US$ 2.6 million
Grant Type: Multiplier grant	**Agency fee % (+US$ amount):** 7% (182,000)	**Expected Start Date:** January 1, 2024
Amount: US$ 2.6 million	**Grant duration:** 3 years	**Expected End Date:** December 31, 2026

Action request

Approve Vietnam's Multiplier grant application.

Grant Summary

The "Ramping Up Learning for All" program aims at bridging the gap in access to quality education for ethnic minority children and children with disabilities.

The activities in this program had already been approved as part of a Multiplier Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) leveraged with co-financing provided by the World Bank in September 2022 (30% of this grant was to be implemented with Save the Children as grant agent). However, the World Bank co-financing was dropped due to loan negotiation issues after approval and the GPE Secretariat subsequently decided to support Save the Children and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in identifying new co-financing to ensure that the program could still be implemented. After multiple meetings and a joint field mission to Vietnam in July 2023, Nippon Foundation confirmed their interest in providing co-financing to the program. The Multiplier Expression of Interest was approved by the Secretariat on October 31, 2023, partially replacing the GPE2020 multiplier allocation approved on September 6, 2022.

The program components are the following:

Component 1 (US$ 587,713): Ensure ethnic minorities children in pre-schools benefit from appropriate learning based on the Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education approach for developing communication skills;
Component 2 (US$ 766,001): Increase mother tongue language use and value ethnic minority culture in primary schools;
Component 3 (US$ 599,096): Strengthen inclusive education for children with disabilities and ethnic minority children.

Component 4 (US$ 110,435): Project management.
Component 5 (US$ 316,398): Technical and implementation management (GA)
GA implementation support costs (US$ 220,358).

Current Portfolio

There is no current grant portfolio in Vietnam. The previous grant closed in 2016.

Outcomes of the ITAP assessment and Board decision

This application is considered under the GPE 2020 operating model.

Significant Opportunities:

In a country where there have been impressive gains in basic education, MOET and partners recognize that ethnic minority and children with disabilities are still lagging. Policies towards these target groups do exist, but implementation is an issue. This program will support the actual implementation of policies to improve the education situation of ethnic minorities and children with disabilities. Successful implementation will motivate the MOET to do more and better for these disadvantaged children. There currently is willingness from the MOET to make progress on the issue, and also a rare momentum among the MOET and partners to collectively discuss and monitor the situation of these disadvantaged children, as demonstrated during the Enabling Factors Analysis workshop supported by the Secretariat in mid-2023.

As a lower-middle-income country whose results in basic education have improved dramatically, the Government of Vietnam has decided not to incur additional debt. This is providing the opportunity for MOET and partners to seek non-traditional co-financing for sources other than multilateral banks to leverage Vietnam's GPE 2025 Multiplier maximum allocation of US$ 50 million (the current approval request is under the GPE 2020 allocation). This Multiplier can also bring about the opportunity to further collaborate with Nippon Foundation either in Vietnam or in other countries.

Significant Issues and Potential Risks

Delays in funds disbursement/implementation: Due to the Vietnamese Government's financial planning and approval system, there is a chance of some delays in implementation. For example, the Ministry of Finance needs to approve the budget by end November, but the funds become available to the MOET only around mid-year next year. These risks are mitigated by the grant agent's constant communication with MOET and by the identification and implementation of activities that do not need government financial commitments during the initial period (such as guideline developments). In addition, the Vice Minister of MOET has committed to provide the necessary political support to ensure that the activities can be implemented timely.

Nippon Foundation as first-time co-financier: Implementation of this program is contingent on the formal approval by Nippon Foundation Board/Japanese Ministry of Transportation, which is expected in late December 2023. Since this is the first time that Nippon Foundation is

collaborating with Save the Children, and also the GPE, there is the risk of misunderstanding around Nippon Foundation's approval, disbursement and reporting processes. This risk is being mitigated by ensuring that all partners have the same understanding of the approval and implementation timelines, as well as of budgets, disbursements procedures and reporting requirements. The GPE Secretariat (including both CEP and EXR) and the grant agent are in constant communication with Nippon Foundation to make sure that expectations are clear for all parties involved. Nippon Foundation is interested in understanding the GPE Board/constituency activities. External communication around the grant would be important to highlight the collaboration. In addition, a high-level mission to Vietnam including Nippon Foundation's Chairman and GPE's Deputy CEO is in the process of being organized, which shows the foundations' commitment to the program.

Recommendation

Based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review and the GARC checklist, the GARC concluded **to recommend to the CEO the approval of an allocation of US$2.6 million to Vietnam with Save the Children Italy as Grant Agent**, under GPE 2020**.**

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: Multiplier grant
Country: Vietnam

CEO/2023/11-22-2023

The CEO, in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors, approves the Multiplier grant for Vietnam in the amount of US$2.6 million plus an additional US$182,000 in agency fees to Save the Children Italy as the grant agent.

Date: November 22, 2023



Laura Frigenti
CEO Global Partnership for Education