CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE 5/06/2024

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO	
FROM: Sven Baeten, Nilse Ryman, Matthew Smith, Jo Bourne, Sally Joanne Elizabeth Gear, David A Balwanz	
SUBJECT: Approval of a system transformation grant for Maldives	
Country	Maldives
System transformation grant allocation	US$ 5,000,000
Allocation requested (%)	100%
Allocation recommended by Secretariat	US$5,000,000
Results based financing	US$2,450,000
Grant agent	UNICEF
Agency fee (% and amount)	7% US$350,000
Period	4 years
Expected start date	7/1/2024
Closing date	6/30/2028
Funding source	GPE Fund

Action request

Approve an allocation from GPE trust funds for a system transformation grant (STG), in support of the program "Operationalizing the Maldives Partnership Compact: Creating opportunities and addressing barriers to inclusive and equitable learning".

Grant Summary

Maldives Partnership Compact policy priority for systems transformation is "equity and inclusion." In the compact, the government and local education group addresses issues identified in the enabling factor analysis (EFA) through the proposed the priority reform area. This STG, and the incoming applications of the system capacity grant (SCG) and GPE Multiplier (World Bank cofinancer) jointly address the EFA challenges and systemic bottlenecks related to n the priority reform. The GPE Board approved the strategic parameters on July 2023.

The STG is strongly aligned to the partnership compact. Its objective is to "transform the education ecosystem into one in which every child, irrespective of gender, where they live, whether they are differentially abled, and/or have complex learning profiles, learns, achieves developmentally appropriate learning milestones, and transitions from school to work and life". It presents activities to achieve three main outcomes.Regarding curriculum implementation: development of institutional capacity for a transformative, skills focused, gender responsive, and content relevant digitally enabled curriculum. Regardingteacher development: teachers achieve the relevant knowledge, skills, and tools to manage classes, deliver the national curriculum, including hybrid learning, mentorship programs and use of gender transformative and differentiated learning methods.Regarding school environments: achieve accessible, safe, and supportive schools that facilitate inclusion, wellbeing, and

learning, especially for students with complex learning profiles, behavioral challenges, and at risk. The program builds on the Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) currently under implementation.

Regarding gender, the program addresses: equal access in professional development, gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination in curriculum, learning materials, and teaching methods, diverse role models, texts, and activities, gender-responsive instruction and remediation strategies, among others. Program design could have benefitted from a recent diagnostic on gender and disability related challenges. The country is encouraged to progress with the proposed gender audit covered by the SCG to ensure that the insights will inform STG design and program implementation. The country and the grant agent are also encouraged to bring knowledge on technical gender and disability inclusion issues to the local education group and the program implementation team.

Current Portfolio

GPE's current portfolio in the Maldives includes a combined ESPIG and Multiplier of US$ 3.5 million, to support the Maldives Learning Advancement and Measurement Project, with the World Bank as grant agent. The grant was approved by the GPE Board in December 2020. The grant will close in June 2024. No request for an extension is expected.

Enabling Factors Assessment

The Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) rated Data and Evidence as high priority. Gender sensitive planning and sector coordination were rated as medium priority and domestic finance as low priority.

***With regards to data and evidence*:** This factor was rated high due to the lack of: a comprehensive EMIS and of capacity in the Ministry of Education to use data and evidence for planning and policy making. This factor will be addressed through the Multiplier (focus on the development of a new EMIS) and the SCG (focus on capacity development on the use of data for planning and monitoring). The expected improvements will support implementation of the STG.

***With regards to gender sensitive planning*:** SCG and multiplier funds will complement STG grant design and delivery by investing in a comprehensive gender audit, gender and disability data analysis and planning and capacity building of ministry officials and key stakeholders.

***With regards to sector coordination*:** The local education group in Maldives is relatively small. Currently, there are efforts to increase its size and participation in policy debate and provide suitable technical expertise to support and ensure accountability for the partnership compact to address equity and inclusion. This will be supported through the SCG.

With regards to domestic finance: To support improvements in the efficiency in the use of resources the SCG will support a thorough budget analysis and capacity building of the ministry of education on financial planning, monitoring, or other issues arising from the review.

Significant Opportunities:

The proposed program is innovative in its multiple approaches to tackle inequality in education outcomes. The implementation of the proposed grant will create an opportunity to generate evidence to support countries with similar challenges.

Significant Issues and Risks:

Program implementation will benefit from the existence and use of accurate data on children with disabilities and gender related challenges. Improvements in data will be financed with the SCG and the GPE multiplier. The country has also benefited from KIX research on data and evidence, which will be discussed at a roundtable in May and will feed into SCG and Multiplier design and STG implementation. The impact on the STG implementation will depend on good coordination between the three grants, lessons from KIX and other related activities in country. With regards to gender and disability inclusion related challenges, the activities may not achieve full objective if the diagnostic is delayed, and data is not available in a timely manner to support program implementation.

The grant agent has provided a risk assessment of national level, sector level, and program level risks, and corresponding mitigation actions which appear to be appropriate and adequate. The risk matrix recognizes potential impact of climate events. Maldives is extremely vulnerable to climate change, which exacerbates inequities in access to quality and inclusive education within the Maldives. The compact includes activities to support climate resilient planning, including capacity building around disaster risk resilience and adaptation, and education in emergencies.

Recommendation

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that the RM recommends to the CEO the approval of a system transformation grant of US$5,000,000 for Maldives with UNICEF as Grant Agent.

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: System Transformation Grant
Country: Maldives

CEO/2024/06 May 2024

The CEO in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors approves the System Transformation Grant request for Maldives in the amount of US$5,000,000 plus an additional US$350,000 in agency fees to UNICEF as the grant agent, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table above, subject to:

a) Availability of funds.

b) Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for grants in annual installments.

Date : May 6, 2024

Laura Frigenti, CEO

