# System Capacity Grant Annual Progress Report Template

**Status:** Accepted

| Country | Grant ID | Grant Agent | Grant Effectiveness/Start Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maldives | GPE0016471 | SCG | 07/15/2024 |

| Grant Amount | Timeframe Examined in this Report | | Date of Report Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1,500,000 (USD) | From Date | To Date | 10/14/2025 |
| | 07/14/2024 | 07/14/2025 | |

**Area(s) and activity group(s) covered by grant**

**Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact**

- Gender-responsive sector planning, including operational planning and budgeting
- Supporting policies and plans to identify and address multiple forms of exclusion (planning for children with disabilities, system resilience and inclusion of displaced children)

**Window 2: Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change**

- Strengthening sector coordination, including local education groups, joint sector reviews and monitoring the effectiveness of the country-level partnership
- Strengthening budget processes and ministry of finance engagement; identifying opportunities to improve the equity and efficiency of education expenditure, including processes toward gender equality
- Cross-sectoral convening

**Window 3: Strengthen capacity, adapt, and learn, to implement and drive results at scale**

- Strengthening data systems, including on improving the availability and use of sex-disaggregated data, and data on children with disabilities
- Training and support for government staff and central and decentralized levels, including on the uptake and use of data and evidence
- Support for implementation capacity, including sector plan implementation monitoring, gender responsiveness of the sector and evaluation of sector plans and policies/programs in priority areas; assess monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity, including use of evidence in policy process

## Implementation Progress

### Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

| Overall progress this reporting period [1] | Previous Rating |
|---|---|
| Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | NA |

**Detailed Description including factors that lead to an upgrade/downgrade in the rating**

i) Major accomplishments

1. First Education Joint Sector Review (JSR)

The Joint Sector Review (JSR), conducted between November 2024 and February 2025, marked a transformative milestone for the Maldives' education sector. The review followed a highly consultative and participatory approach, engaging stakeholders across all levels of the education system. Comprehensive data was collected from every school and all departments within the Ministry of Education, enabling a

thorough assessment of sector-wide progress, challenges, and priorities.
The JSR culmination summit, held on January 27, 2025, brought together 85 key stakeholders including government officials, educators, development partners, civil society organizations, and other actors to review progress, identify challenges, and strengthen collective efforts toward national education goals. The summit provided an inclusive platform for meaningful dialogue, ensuring that diverse perspectives, particularly those of marginalized and underrepresented groups, were considered in shaping the future of education in the Maldives.
A key outcome of the summit was the development of an Aide-Memoire, which outlined 11 actionable recommendations for the upcoming Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Partnership Compact. Notably, the recommendations emphasized advancing equity, with targeted strategies to address gender disparities and promote inclusive education for all learners

2. Principals' Conference 2025
The Principals' Conference, held from October 11–12, 2025, brought together over 200 principals from government schools across the Maldives, marking the first national forum of its kind since 2019. The event resulted in a renewed commitment to strengthening collaborative school leadership and shaping future-ready schools. It provided a platform for policy dialogue, sharing best practices, and bridging the gap between policy and practice through frontline insights. The conference was inaugurated by President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, reflecting the high-level importance placed on school leadership in driving education reform and improving learning outcomes.

3.Study on the Student's Education Transition
A key achievement of the study, conducted with support from the Maldives National University, is its expected contribution to strengthening the implementation of the Education Act (24/2020), particularly in improving student transitions to higher secondary and higher education. The study explored barriers to education transitions and found that fewer than 40% of students nationally move from Grade 10 to 11, with significant regional and gender disparities. Girls transition at higher rates (47.4%) than boys (35.3%), with only 11.5% of students in the Central Region progressing, compared to 38.7% in Malé City. Influencing factors include educational policies, socio-economic conditions, regional disparities, and limited support for students with disabilities.
The study generated a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and enablers shaping student pathways and provided actionable recommendations to inform inclusive planning, targeted interventions, and better alignment between education and employment opportunities.

4.Education Sector Budget Analysis
The completion of the first-ever Education Sector Budget Analysis for the Maldives marks a major policy achievement, strengthening evidence-based planning and financial governance in the education sector. Covering the past five years, the assessment identified critical challenges such as structural rigidities, underinvestment in priority areas—including school improvement, inclusion, and institutional capacity—and the lack of disaggregated financial data. It emphasized the need to improve the efficiency, equity, and effectiveness of education financing. Notably, the analysis recommended strategic reforms such as equity-based and gender-responsive budgeting, enhanced transparency tools, and long-term financing frameworks. These actionable recommendations provide a data-driven foundation for aligning resources with the Education Transformation Agenda and ensuring more equitable and impactful outcomes for all learners.

ii)Implementation Challenges, Reasons and Mitigation Measures

The implementation of the grant has progressed slower than anticipated due to systemic challenges related to policy, capacity, and operational processes within the Ministry of Education (MoE). These broad challenges have led to delays across several key components.
1.Delays in Strategic Policy Guidance and institutional oversight.
One of the initial challenges observed was the centralized decision-making structure within the Ministry of Education. While the issuance of policy guidance has gradually improved, policy-level supervision and stewardship with clear accountability mechanisms at the implementation level still require strengthening. Arrangements to ensure that implementing departments adhere to agreed timelines for both conceptualization and execution remain underdeveloped and would benefit from further enhancement.

2. Operational Inefficiencies and Institutional Gaps. At the operational level, the governance and oversight arrangements established at the outset were not fully applied, impacting implementation efficiency. This has resulted in a time-intensive, multi-step review process for project concepts, creating significant delays. These operational hurdles are compounded by institutional capacity gaps and substantial workloads on staff within key departments such as the Finance Section and the Policy and Planning Division (PPRD).

3. Critical Project Dependencies and Long-Term Delays. These policy and operational challenges have created a domino effect, with key projects being significantly delayed due to their reliance on others. A clear example is the development of the Medium-Term Education Sector Financing Framework, which hinges on the completion of the Education Sector Budget Analysis. In turn, efforts to build the capacity of Ministry of Education staff to implement the financing framework and carry out ongoing budget analyses can only begin once the framework itself is in place. This sequence of dependencies underscores the need for coordinated planning and timely execution to avoid bottlenecks and ensure progress across critical reform areas.

What remains to be done

1.Delays in Strategic Policy & Institutional Guidance: (Initiatives stalled pending high-level decisions and role clarity)
Proposed Mitigation Measures:
a) Develop an accountability framework with clear delegated functions based on risk levels.
b) Activate quarterly steering committee meetings to foster cross-department dialogue.
c) Undertake bottleneck analysis of constrained activities and implement measures to accelerate actions.
Responsible Entity: MoE Policy and Planning division Timeline: Q4 2025

2.Operational Inefficiencies & Capacity Gaps (Weak governance, lengthy approval processes, and limited partner capacity)
Proposed Mitigation Measures
a) Review the current workflow guidance, streamline workflows and consistently monitor adherence to the workflow for concept notes and TORs with defined timelines and pilot a fast-track approval process for low-risk activities.
b) Conduct targeted capacity-building workshops on development of TORs and concept notes and results-based management and provide ongoing technical assistance for activity planning.
Responsible Entity: MoE, UNICEF Timeline: Q4 2025-Q2 2026

3.Activity Dependencies & Inadequate Collaboration (Domino effect of delays and insufficient joint problem-solving)
Proposed Mitigation Measure:
a) Refer to activity on activating steering committee. regular joint reflection sessions to be a regular agenda item of the steering committee meetings to help foster shared accountability, manage timelines, and identify parallel workstreams where possible.
Responsible Entity: UNICEF, MoE, Implementing Partners Timeline: Q4 2025

4.Delayed Documentation of Impact (Implementation delays prevent the capturing of results and lessons learned)
Proposed Mitigation Measure
a) Identify and implement activities to capture qualitative outcomes and impact stories as activities progress.
Responsible Entity: UNICEF, Implementing Partners Timeline: Q1 2026

iii. Factors that led to any upgrade/downgrade in the progress rating above, compared with the previous reporting period (if any).
There is no upgrade or downgrade of progress as this reporting is the baseline.

iv.Any progress was made in mitigating previous reporting periods' challenges or delays? (if any).
This is the progress report for the first reporting period.

## Grant Implementation Progress, by Grant Window

| Grant Window | Level of Progress this Reporting Period [2] | Previous Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | NA |

**Detailed Description:**
(i) Key Activities and Success:

1. Capacity Building for Gender-Responsive Planning:
A customized training course, The Essentials of Education Sector Planning, is being planned for November 2025 conducted in collaboration with UNESCO IIEP for 32 education staff. The course included modules on gender-responsive planning and gender-sensitive data collection, equipping participants with tools to support the development of the new Education Sector Plan.

2. School Leadership Engagement:
The Principals' Conference (October 11–12, 2025) convened a total of 220 school leaders to discuss future-ready schools and the role of leadership in shaping equitable education. Critical policies affecting girls and boys were reviewed, with principals' feedback integrated into policy dialogue.

3. Comprehensive Gender Analysis:
An in-depth gender analysis is underway, led by an international consultant. The study examines how gender intersects with other inequalities such as disability and geography and will provide evidence-based recommendations to promote equity and inclusion.

4. Education Sector Budget Analysis:
The first-ever budget analysis for the education sector identified gaps in financing and recommended strategic reforms, including equity-based and gender-responsive budgeting. These findings will inform the development of a costed, results-focused Education Sector Plan.

5. Study on Education Transitions:
A national study explored barriers and enablers in student transitions from lower to higher secondary and into higher education. It highlighted gender disparities and provided actionable recommendations to support targeted interventions for both girls and boys.

(ii) Outputs/Deliverables Completed:

- The Education Sector Budget Analysis report.
- Report on the analysis of education transitions in the Maldives. (Lost in Transition)

(iii) Systemic Capacity Strengthening Purpose:
- The grant is on its way to fulfilling its purpose and can by produce the required analytical by end of the year.

| Grant Window | Level of Progress this Reporting Period 2 | Previous Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Window 2: Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | NA |

**Detailed Description:**
(i) Key Activities and Success

1. Joint Sector Review (JSR):
Held between November 2024 and February 2025, the JSR convened 85 stakeholders from government, development partners, and civil society. It marked a transformative milestone by fostering collective action and generating concrete recommendations focused on equity, inclusion, and addressing gaps in education financing data.

2. Principals' Conference:
Strengthened coordination between schools and the Ministry of Education by engaging a total of 210 school leaders in policy dialogue. Discussions centered on newly introduced policies impacting student learning outcomes and resource allocation for school improvement, reinforcing alignment between school-level leadership and national priorities.

3. Education Sector Budget Analysis:
Provided a robust evidence base for engaging the Ministry of Finance and enhancing budget processes. The analysis recommended strategic reforms to shift from traditional funding models to equity-based and gender-responsive financing, supporting long-term planning and transformative change in the education sector.

(ii)Outputs Completed:
- JSR Aide-memoire
- Education sector budget analysis
- Report of Principals' Conference is expected to be received by end of October.

(iii) Systemic Capacity Strengthening Purpose:
- The grant is progressing toward its goals but is moderately constrained by limited progress in strengthening the Local Education Group (LEG), which is essential for coordinated sector dialogue and oversight. To enable transformative change, a shift from traditional funding to strategic, long-term financing is needed—supported by innovative approaches that align resources with equity and inclusion priorities.

| Grant Window | Level of Progress this Reporting Period 2 | Previous Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Window 3: Strengthen capacity, adapt, and learn, to implement and | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | NA |

drive results at scale

**Detailed Description:**
(i) Key Activities and Success/Lack Thereof:

1. Education Transition Study:
Completed by Maldives National University, this study generated critical insights into barriers and enablers affecting student progression. It supports adaptive planning by informing targeted strategies to improve equitable transitions for all learners, especially those facing systemic disadvantages.

2. Comprehensive Gender Analysis:
Currently underway, this study is building capacity to address intersectional inequalities by examining how gender interacts with disability, geography, and other factors. Its evidence-based recommendations will guide inclusive policy development and implementation.
Digital Transformation Landscape Analysis
This ongoing study assesses system readiness for digital learning and identifying gaps in access and inclusion. It supports adaptive learning by informing strategies to ensure equitable digital education, particularly for children with disabilities.

3. Evaluation of TechPath (Digital/hybrid learning model):
The evaluation of UNICEF's hybrid learning pilot in 15 schools is generating lessons on what works in digital education. Findings will guide decisions on scaling inclusive and innovative learning models, contributing to system-wide learning and adaptation.

4. Sector Planning Capacity Building:
Through a tailored UNESCO IIEP training, 32 education staff are being equipped with tools for sector analysis, monitoring, and gender-responsive planning. This foundational investment strengthens institutional capacity to implement and sustain inclusive education reforms at scale.

(ii) Outputs/Deliverables Completed:
- Final report for the Students' Education Transitions Inception report of the Gender analysis
- Inception report of the TechPath evaluation
- Inception report on the Landscape analysis of readiness for digital learning.

(iii) Systemic Capacity Strengthening Purpose:
- The grant is on its way to fulfilling its purpose by generating robust, equity-focused evidence and building the data/learning system for adaptation.

## Lessons, innovative/promising practices

Successful Practices:

- A strengthened focus on equity and inclusion is increasingly evident within the education system. This commitment is actively shaping policy dialogue and fostering the development of more accessible and supportive learning environments to better address the needs of every child.
- A clear demonstration of this priority is the Ministry of Education's alignment with GPE's emphasis on gender-disaggregated data. All data collection tools are now being designed to systematically capture gender-specific information, ensuring that planning and policy are informed by a deeper understanding of equity.

Lessons Learned:
- The implementation of the GPE SCG in the Maldives has revealed key insights into the relationship between policy prioritization and program progress. Activities that were aligned with policy priorities moved forward effectively, while those lacking such alignment encountered delays and challenges. This highlights the need to strategically position education initiatives within the broader policy agenda to ensure sustained momentum and support. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding the policy context, engaging stakeholders early, and maintaining flexibility in planning to adapt to shifting priorities.

## Impact stories

Due to delays in implementation, the initiative has not yet progressed to a stage where meaningful impact stories can be documented.

## Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, Results Framework and other Supporting Documentation

| # | File Name | Document Type | Description |
|---|---|---|---|

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

## Financial Reporting & Grant Management

## Financial Reporting on GPE Grant

### Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate

| Approved Budget to Date | Cumulative Expenditure | Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate | Level of Financial Absorption |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1,500,000 | 356,376.51 | 23.76 | Off Track |

**Since the financial absorption is not rated as 'on track', please provide an explanation that identifies the main activities that have been delayed and their corresponding unspent amounts, as well as reasons for the delay and steps taken to ensure that expenditure absorption gets on track in the next reporting period.**

The underspending during the reporting period is primarily attributed to limited implementation capacity among partners.

### Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

**Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period**
479,000

**Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period**
356,376.51

**Explanation for underspending or overspending in excess of 10%**

## Management Performance

**Level of management performance**
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

**Detailed Description**
During the reporting period, some implementation challenges were observed, which appear to be partially linked to the current management arrangements. These have had an impact on both the pace and overall effectiveness of grant implementation.

While the Ministry of Education's leadership and commitment to the program are fully recognized, certain structural and coordination constraints such as delays in decision-making, limited technical capacity, and unclear role definitions have contributed to slower-than-anticipated progress toward planned outcomes.

In response, some measures have been undertaken to strengthen implementation:

1)Communication and coordination between UNICEF, the Project Management Unit (PMU), the Ministry of Education, and implementing partners have been enhanced.
2)Technical assistance has been provided to the PMU on UNICEF's HACT procedures, along with guidance to implementing partners on the development of Terms of Reference and concept notes.
3)UNICEF has instituted internal monthly management meetings to monitor grant utilization and address implementation challenges.

## Revisions to the grant

**This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the Secretariat for their approval?**
No

**How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?**
Moderately Likely

**Detailed Description**
The Mid-Term Review of the Partnership Compact is scheduled for November 2025. This will serve as a strategic opportunity to reflect on current priorities, assess the systemic challenges affecting their implementation, and consider any necessary adjustments in response to the evolving education landscape.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: List of Acronyms

| Acronym | Description |
|---|---|
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| JSR | Joint Sector Review |

| | |
|---|---|
| MTR | Mid Term Review |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| PPRD | Policy, Planning and Research Division |

[1] Highly Unsatisfactory- The grant has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory - The grant has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory - The grant has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory – The grant is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

[2] Highly Unsatisfactory – The window has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory – The window has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory – The window has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings. Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

[3] tooltip