Ministry of Education and Training

KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

GPE SYSTEMS CAPACITY GRANT (SCG)

PROGRAMME DOCUMENT – 2026

Coordinating Agency:

Swaziland Network Campaign for Education for All

Grant Agent:

unicef for every child

GPE Transforming Education

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Background

Country Brief

Eswatini is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, bordered by South Africa and Mozambique. With an estimated population of about 1.2 million people, it is among the smallest nations in the region by size and population. The country's administrative capital is Mbabane, while Lobamba serves as the royal and legislative capital, reflecting Eswatini's unique governance structure that blends traditional and modern systems.

Eswatini is classified as a lower-middle-income economy, with agriculture, manufacturing, and services forming the backbone of economic activity. Sugar production and textiles remain key exports, complemented by strong trade links with neighboring countries. Eswatini's gross national income per capita is USD 3,860[1] and has an estimated Gini Index of 54.6[2], placing it among the five most unequal countries in the world. According to the latest data, 65.3 per cent of children in Eswatini live below the international poverty line of USD 3.65 per day and 40.6 per cent are in extreme poverty[3]. In non-monetary terms, 46.6 per cent of children are deprived in at least three domains of multidimensional child poverty[4].

Eswatini's governance system is distinctive as one of the few remaining monarchies in the world. The King holds executive authority, supported by a bicameral parliament and a network of traditional structures that play an important role in decision-making and community engagement. This governance model provides a foundation for stability and continuity, while also requiring strong coordination among ministries and stakeholders to advance complex agendas.

Education sector context

Education is enshrined as a constitutional right in Eswatini, with the Free Primary Education (FPE) Act (2010) guaranteeing seven years of compulsory primary education. The sector operates under a 7:2:2 structure (seven years primary, two years junior secondary, two years senior secondary and two years post-secondary – AS/A Levels), complemented by Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) and Post-School Education and Training (PSET), including tertiary education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2022–2034 and the Education Transformation Plan (2025–2035), including the Eswatini Government Programme of Action (2024-29) which set out a strategic direction to modernize Eswatini's education system by updating curricula to incorporate STEM, digital literacy and Industry 4.0 skills, restructuring TVET and higher education to expand micro-credentials and applied sciences, and accelerating digital transformation through stronger ICT integration and readiness for artificial intelligence. These frameworks also prioritize strengthening teacher development and professionalization in line with the Council of Educators Act (2023), while enhancing system resilience and preparedness for future shocks and crises, as underscored by the COVID-19 experience.

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[1] https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/ny-gnp-pcap-cd
[2] https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/si-pov-gini
[3] Salmeron-Gomez, Dylan, et. al., (2023), *Global Trends in Monetary Child Poverty According to International Poverty Lines*, Washington DC & New York: The World Bank Group and UNICEF
[4] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MOEPD), [nd], Multidimensional Child Poverty in Eswatini, [np]: [np]

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The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) is the lead national authority responsible for policy formulation, strategic planning, regulation, and oversight of the entire education sector. Its mandate includes:

- Ensuring equitable access to quality education at all levels.
- Developing and implementing the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and operational plans.
- Managing teacher recruitment, deployment, and professional development.
- Overseeing curriculum development and assessment systems.
- Mobilizing and coordinating sector financing, in partnership with development agencies and other ministries for resource mobilization and sector-wide planning.
- Leading crisis preparedness and resilience planning under national multi-hazard frameworks.

MoET is also responsible for key bodies such as the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), the National Curriculum Centre (NCC), the Eswatini Qualifications Authority (EQA), and collaborates with the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) to ensure quality assurance in tertiary education. The MoET is primarily funded through the national government budget, which comes through the programme-based planning and budgeting approach, and utilizes the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) as a tool for budgeting.

Teacher recruitment and appointments are managed by the TSC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service. MoET is responsible for teacher professional development, monitoring and school-level management. The actual hiring process, including advertising posts, selection, and confirmation, is handled by the TSC in line with public service regulations.

Teachers and school leaders are represented by organized bodies. The Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) is the main teachers' organization in the country, representing educators' interests on issues such as recruitment, deployment, working conditions, and professional development. SNAT actively participates in consultations with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and is a key voice in policy discussions, including curriculum reforms and teacher welfare.

The Eswatini Principals' Association (EPA) is another key stakeholder in the education sector. It represents school heads and plays an important role in advocating for effective school management, leadership development, and quality assurance. EPA engages with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) on issues such as curriculum implementation, resource allocation, and policy reforms.

In addition, Eswatini has a Local Education Group (LEG), which serves as the main platform for inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action among government, development partners, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. The LEG is widely representative and mandated to meet regularly.

Partners supporting education in Eswatini include the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank, Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the African Development Bank (AfDB) which jointly finance large-scale programs aimed at strengthening early childhood development, basic education systems, skills development, and building infrastructure. These contributions use an aligned funding modality, meaning funds are disbursed through national treasury accounts and managed under Eswatini's public financial management systems, ensuring integration with government processes.

Other key partners include UNICEF, which provides technical and financial support for initiatives such as EMIS upgrades, online learning, ECCDE, quality assurance, sector monitoring, and inclusive education, and UNESCO, which supports curriculum development and school safety frameworks. Additionally, bilateral partners like the European Union (EU) are investing in TVET modernization, private sector support inclusive quality education improvement, while civil society organizations under the Education Out Loud (EOL) program contribute to advocacy and accountability. The LEG is mandated to coordinate these partnerships.

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Results and persisting challenges

Eswatini has made notable progress in expanding access to education, achieving near-universal primary enrolment following the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2010. Major reforms are underway, including the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum at primary level, and rollout to secondary education and introduction of A-levels, alongside the gradual expansion of Grade 0 to strengthen early childhood care, development and education and improve school readiness. These reforms are anchored in a strong policy framework under the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2022–2034) and its Multi-Year Action Plan (2022–2025).

Despite these advances, the education system faces a persistent paradox: while participation in primary education is high, learning outcomes remain weak and progression deteriorates sharply beyond the primary cycle. According to the 2021–2022 MICS, adjusted net attendance is high at primary level (94.6%) but drops steeply at lower secondary (50.8%) and upper secondary (28.9%). Completion follows a similar pattern, declining from 79.7% at primary to 36.5% at upper secondary. Although transition from primary to lower secondary is relatively strong (90.3%), high levels of overage-for-grade, 20.3% in primary and 47.0% in lower secondary, signal late entry, repetition and stalled progression, which in turn increase dropout risks as learners' approach high-stakes examination years.

Foundational learning outcomes underscore the depth of the challenge. Home-based assessments from MICS show that among children aged 7–14, only 49.2% meet minimum reading benchmarks and just 28.9% meet numeracy benchmarks. Among children in Grades 2 and 3, performance is even weaker, with only 15.9% meeting reading benchmarks and 8.0% meeting numeracy benchmarks. These early learning deficits are compounded by very low access to early childhood education: only 9.3% of children aged 36–59 months attend ECCDE, leaving many learners underprepared for Grade 1 despite a later surge in participation one year before primary entry.

In 2025, the Ministry of Education and Training undertook an enabling factors analysis. It concluded that teacher workforce dynamics further constrain learning quality. While most public-service teachers are permanently employed, most non-public-service teachers are hired on temporary contracts, creating instability in parts of the system. At the primary level, the proportion of qualified teachers improved from 71% in 2015 to 81% in 2018, but progress has stalled at secondary level, where the share of qualified teachers has remained at 72%. Qualification mismatches are common in primary education, where teachers trained for secondary education are deployed in early grades, often without the pedagogical preparation needed to teach multiple subjects or support younger learners effectively.

In addition, system-level monitoring and evidence use remain weak. Eswatini's last national learning assessment was SACMEQ in 2013, and the system currently relies heavily on high-stakes examinations (Grade 7, Form 3, Form 5), which provide limited insight into learning trajectories, equity gaps, or early warning signs. While plans exist to introduce early-grade assessments through GPE and World Bank support, stakeholders emphasize the need to institutionalize these efforts within a regular, nationally representative learning assessment framework and to re-establish regional and international benchmarking.

Data systems present mixed progress. The Education Management Information System has been upgraded to a web-based DHIS2 platform with analytical dashboards and partial integration of disability data. However, gaps in technical capacity, limited training for school-level data producers, inconsistent annual reporting, and weak linkage between EMIS, learning assessments and examinations constrain effective planning and monitoring. A broader culture of evidence use, interpreting, visualizing and applying data for decision-making remains underdeveloped.

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Equity and inclusion challenges persist. While gender parity in enrolment has largely been achieved, emerging evidence points to growing disadvantages for boys in several outcomes, alongside longstanding barriers faced by children with special needs and disabilities. Although inclusive education is a stated priority in policy, disability data is not fully standardized, schools require support to report accurately, and monitoring mechanisms are weak. Sector reviews and accountability processes are not yet sufficiently institutionalized to track inclusion outcomes consistently.

Sector coordination and financing further shape system performance. The Local Education Group is inclusive and meets regularly, but its effectiveness is limited by logistical constraints, unclear reporting lines, and uneven engagement from senior leadership and development partners. Public expenditure on education stands at around 21% of the national budget, meeting global benchmarks, yet efficiency and equity concerns persist. Secondary education costs continue to fall heavily on households, capitation grants do not adequately reflect equity considerations, and early childhood education remains underfunded despite its central role in addressing foundational learning gaps.

Together, these challenges limit Eswatini's ability to translate strong policy commitments and substantial investment into improved learning outcomes and equitable progression. Without strengthened data systems, institutionalized learning assessment, inclusive planning, and more effective coordination, monitoring and accountability, the education sector risks sustaining inefficiencies and inequities despite an otherwise robust strategic framework.

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Proposal development

The development of the SCG programme document was undertaken in a span of 4 months, and included participation and inputs from several Local Education Group Members, including the System-Wide Approach Coordinator (SWAP), MoET Principal Secretary, MoET Director Education, MoET Planning Officer, In-Service Training (INSET) Coordinator, Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) Secretary General, Exams Council, National Curriculum Center Director, EMIS Manager, MoET French Inspector and EU projects focal point, MoET Secondary Chief Inspector, SWANCEFA, and World Bank.

The Grant Agent (UNICEF) convened 6 coordination meetings, chaired by SWAP Coordinator, which produced 6 versions of the programme document and budget based on feedback received from stakeholders at in-person meetings and email exchanges.

The Local Education Group met on 2nd March 2026 and formally endorsed the proposal without reservations (ref: minutes attached).

Programme objectives and key results

Overall objective

To strengthen Eswatini's education system by establishing a more coherent and accountable sector coordination architecture, elevating the quality and professionalism of the teaching workforce, and institutionalizing a robust national learning assessment system, thereby enabling effective, sustained implementation of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2022–2034) and the Education Transformation Plan (2025–2035), and driving measurable improvements in system performance and learning outcomes.

Specific objectives

- **Specific objective 1:** To establish and operationalize the Partnership Compact and strengthen sector coordination.
- **Specific objective 2:** To enhance teacher development and workforce management.
- **Specific objective 3:** To develop and institutionalize a national learning assessment system.

Alignment with findings from Enabling Factors Analysis

The proposed objectives directly respond to the priorities identified in the Enabling Factors Analysis by targeting the most binding system-level constraints affecting the education sector.

Specific Objective 1, focuses on establishing and operationalizing the Partnership Compact and strengthening sector coordination, addresses the analysis' finding that inclusive dialogue and coordinated action across the sector remain limited. By reinforcing coordination mechanisms, the objective aims to improve alignment among stakeholders and support coherent implementation of sector reforms, including the competency-based curriculum.

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Specific Objective 2, seeks to enhance teacher development and workforce management, contributes to strengthening the system's capacity to implement reforms effectively, particularly in relation to curriculum delivery and equitable allocation of human resources.

Specific Objective 3, aims to develop and institutionalize a national learning assessment system, directly responding to the high priority enabling factor on Data and Evidence. Establishing a standardized national assessment framework will enable systematic tracking of learning outcomes, strengthen evidence-based decision-making, and provide the monitoring foundation necessary for evaluating progress in education reforms.

Expected outcomes

- **Expected outcome 1:** A fully operational Partnership Compact is established, providing a shared framework that aligns national education priorities with development partner support, strengthens the effectiveness of the Local Education Group, and enables more coherent, coordinated and transparent planning, financing and implementation across government and partners.

- **Expected outcome 2:** An improved, well-managed and professional teaching workforce is in place, supported by digital learning reforms, and by strengthened recruitment, deployment and workforce planning systems that ensure teachers are equitably distributed and effectively deployed across the education system.

- **Expected outcome 3:** A sustainable national learning assessment system is institutionalized, enabling regular and reliable monitoring of learning outcomes across education levels and strengthening national capacity to use assessment evidence to inform policy decisions, curriculum reform, teacher training and targeted interventions to improve learning outcomes.

Description of activities

- **Objective 1: Sector coordination**

  - Activity 1.1. Partnership Compact endorsed and operationalised: Facilitate the development, formal endorsement, and operationalisation of Eswatini's first Partnership Compact, ensuring it serves as a strategic framework to align national education priorities with coordinated support from development partners, and guides implementation, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.

  - Activity 1.2. Strengthening sector coordination, governance, and accountability capacities.

  - Activity 1.3. Conduct inclusive Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) annually: Organize and facilitate annual JSR meetings with participation from government, development partners, civil society, and other stakeholders to review ESSP progress and agree on next steps.

  - Activity 1.4. Strengthen the capacity of the LEG to represent, discuss, and agree on pathways to support the implementation of sector-wide education policies.

  - Activity 1.5. Develop the 2026-2030 Operational Plan for the National Education Transformation Plan.

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- **Objective 2: Teacher development and workforce management**

  - Activity 2.1. Develop the INSET teacher training manuals and modules on financial management, instructional supervision, organizational management, and curriculum implementation.

  - Activity 2.2. Strengthening the capacity of INSET lecturers on Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, the use of teacher training manuals, and conducting online trainings.

  - Activity 2.3. Strengthening of digitalization of in-service training centers through providing digitalization of content.

  - Activity 2.4. Establish a teacher profile management system: design a centralized data management system to enable the MoET to maintain up-to-date teacher profiles, including deployment, location, qualifications, courses and in-service training completed, performance evaluations, and career progression, to support effective workforce planning, professional development, and equitable deployment.

  - Activity 2.5. Develop an e-Inspection online platform: create, pilot, and launch a digital platform for conducting school inspections, enabling real-time data collection and reporting.

  - Activity 2.6. Produce annual school inspection reports: compile and publish yearly reports summarizing inspection findings, compliance levels, and recommendations for improvement.

- **Objective 3: National Learning Assessment System**

  - Activity 3.1. Revise and adopt the National Assessment Framework: Complete and approve a structured framework for assessing learning outcomes across education levels.

  - Activity 3.2. Develop the operational manual for teachers, to conduct formative assessments.

  - Activity 3.3. Develop the operational manual for ECESWA to conduct national standardized assessments.

  - Activity 3.4. Train 'bigger INSET' (INSET, Inspectorate, NCC, Tertiary representatives and trainers of trainers[5] , ECESWA) on implementation of the National Assessment Framework aligned to curriculum framework to ensure accurate and reliable evaluation of learning outcomes.

  - Activity 3.5. Publish National Assessment Report: compile, publish, and share report on national learning assessment findings to inform policy and planning decisions.

  - Activity 3.6. Develop the regulatory framework for establishing a National Assessment Unit within the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA), including defining mandates,

[5] Trainers of trainers is a subset of teachers who have been trained.

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governance structures, operational standards, and implementation modalities to strengthen national assessment systems.

How the proposed actions strengthen system capacity

The proposed actions under *Objective 1: Sector Coordination* will establish a robust governance and coordination framework that enhances coherence, transparency, and accountability across the education sector. Endorsing and operationalizing the Partnership Compact provides a unified platform for aligning national priorities with development partner support, reducing fragmentation and ensuring efficient resource use. Regular inclusive Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) and quarterly coordination meetings institutionalize evidence-based dialogue and continuous monitoring, enabling timely adjustments to implementation challenges. Ensuring inclusive representation in the Local Education Group (LEG) brings diverse perspectives from government, civil society, private sector, and learners, fostering shared ownership and participatory decision-making. Finally, producing annual donor mapping and alignment reports strengthens resource harmonization and minimizes duplication, which is critical for sustaining reforms and maximizing impact.

Under *Objective 2: Teacher Development and Workforce Management*, the actions prioritize strengthening the foundations of a competent, responsive, and effectively managed teaching workforce to drive improvements in education quality. The review and updating of the National Curriculum Framework ensures alignment with national priorities and competency-based approaches, providing a coherent basis for teacher practice and professional learning. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of in-service training providers, alongside the digitalization of training centres through enhanced content, resources, equipment, and skills development, expand access to high-quality, scalable professional development opportunities across the system.

The establishment of a centralized teacher profile management system enables the Ministry of Education and Training to maintain comprehensive and up-to-date data on teacher deployment, qualifications, professional development, and performance, supporting strategic workforce planning and equitable distribution. Targeted training for school administrators on inspection tools, legal frameworks, and emerging education issues further strengthens instructional leadership, governance, and accountability at school level.

In parallel, the development and rollout of an e-Inspection platform modernizes quality assurance processes by enabling real-time data collection, analysis, and reporting. The annual production and publication of school inspection reports consolidate evidence on system performance, promotes transparency, and informs policy decisions and resource allocation. Collectively, these interventions enhance curriculum relevance, professional capacity, leadership effectiveness, and data-driven accountability across the education system.

Under *Objective 3: National Learning Assessment System*, the actions aim to institutionalize a robust, coherent, and sustainable framework for measuring learning outcomes and strengthening evidence-based decision-making across the education sector. The revision and formal adoption of the National Assessment Framework establishes a comprehensive structure for learning assessment across all education levels, ensuring alignment with competency-based education principles. This is operationalized through the development and adoption of detailed manuals that standardize procedures, tools, and quality assurance mechanisms, promoting consistency and reliability in implementation.

Capacity building through the training of the broader INSET ecosystem—including inspectorate, curriculum specialists, tertiary institutions, and trainers of trainers—ensures that stakeholders are equipped to apply

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the framework effectively and generate accurate, credible data on competency attainment. The annual publication and dissemination of National Assessment Reports consolidates system-level evidence on learning outcomes, supporting transparent communication and informing policy, planning, and resource prioritization.

To sustain these efforts institutionally, the development of a regulatory framework for establishing a dedicated National Assessment Unit within the Examinations Council of Eswatini, will be able to clarify mandates, design governance arrangements, and provide operational standards to strengthen the coordination and oversight of national assessment functions. Collectively, these measures enhance the system's capacity to generate high-quality data, promote accountability, and drive continuous improvement in teaching, learning, and education policy.

Gender equality and inclusion

Gender equality and inclusion are embedded as cross-cutting priorities throughout the programme design, reflecting both national policy commitments and the persistent equity challenges identified in the sector.

The programme explicitly recognizes disparities affecting different groups of learners, including boys who are increasingly at risk of poorer outcomes, as well as children with disabilities and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Interventions are therefore designed to move beyond access and address systemic barriers to participation, progression, and learning, ensuring that reforms contribute to more equitable outcomes across the education system.

At the systems level, inclusion is operationalized through strengthened data and accountability mechanisms. The programme supports improvements in EMIS and learning assessment systems, including the integration and standardization of disability data and the use of evidence to identify and address equity gaps.

Inclusive Joint Sector Reviews and a more representative Local Education Group further ensure that diverse stakeholders, including civil society, can participate in dialogue and decision-making, helping to institutionalize attention to gender and inclusion in planning, monitoring, and policy adjustments.

At the service delivery level, the programme integrates gender-responsive and inclusive approaches within teacher development, curriculum implementation, and assessment systems. Teacher training and continuous professional development are designed to strengthen educators' capacity to respond to diverse learner needs, including through inclusive pedagogies and improved deployment practices. In parallel, the development of a national learning assessment system enables the generation of disaggregated data to track learning outcomes across different groups, supporting targeted interventions and reinforcing a system-wide focus on equity, protection, and meaningful participation for all adolescents.

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Implementation Arrangements

Ministry of Education and Training

The Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of the overall objectives of this project, in line with national priorities. In addition, as part of its mandate, the Ministry of Education and Training commits to ensuring that the following complementary activities are undertaken:

a. Providing the necessary institutional support and timely inputs required for the effective implementation of the agreed activities, including the provision of relevant data and technical information, designation of appropriate personnel, facilitation of access to schools and education institutions, and convening of coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders as needed.
b. Conducting school inspections using in-person and digital modalities, in alignment with the available inspection tools launched in 2025.
c. In-Service Education and Training (INSET)
   - INSET is a key initiative under the Ministry of Education and Training, aimed at improving teacher quality through curriculum, content, and pedagogical mastery.
   - In the context of this System Capacity Grant, INSET will lead activity 2.1 focused on the development of the INSET teacher training manuals on financial management, instructional supervision, organization management, and curriculum implementation.
   - In addition, INSET will lead activity 2.2 on strengthening the capacity of INSET lecturers on Continuous Professional Development for teachers, the use of the teacher training manuals, and conducting online training.
   - Overall, INSET is the responsible entity to ensure that teachers are trained, in line with available and forthcoming frameworks that may result from the SCG programme.

Grant Agent

Selection

The Ministry of Education and Training initiated the selection process for the grant agent by issuing a call for expressions of interest in early November 2025, with a submission deadline at the end of the month. This open and time-bound process aimed to ensure transparency and allow qualified partners to express their interest in supporting the implementation of the System Capacity Grant (SCG). The evaluation of applications was conducted by a committee led by the Ministry, comprising the Director of Education, the Planning Officer, the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP) Coordinator, and the Principal Secretary, alongside representatives from SWANCEFA and the GPE Coordinating Agency.

In response, UNICEF Eswatini formally submitted its application on 13 November 2025 through a letter addressed to the Director of Education. Following the review process, the Ministry appointed UNICEF as the grant agent on 4 December 2025, as communicated through an official letter from the Principal Secretary. UNICEF subsequently confirmed its acceptance of this role on 5 December 2025 through a formal letter addressed to the Principal Secretary, thereby completing the selection process.

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Roles and responsibilities

To ensure accountable, high-impact delivery of the GPE System Capacity Grant, UNICEF as the appointed Grant Agent will provide full strategic, fiduciary, and operational stewardship across implementation, financial management, safeguards, and capacity strengthening.

- **Strategic and fiduciary stewardship**
  - Serve as the *fiduciary agent* for the grant, ensuring funds are used for eligible activities and in line with the approved results framework, budget, and work plan.
  - Provide *strategic implementation support* to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to operationalize the Partnership Compact and priority capacity-strengthening activities (coordination architecture, teacher development systems, national learning assessment system).

- **Work planning, budgeting, and reporting**
  - Lead annual/quarterly work planning and budgeting with MoET and the Coordinating Agency (CA), ensuring alignment to the ESSP and Education Transformation Plan.
  - Maintain a results-based management approach (targets, milestones, and variance analysis) and submit narrative and financial reports to GPE and the Local Education Group (LEG) as per agreed schedules.
  - Update the risk register (programmatic, fiduciary, and contextual risks) and propose mitigation measures for LEG review.

- **Procurement, financial management, and compliance**
  - Apply UNICEF Financial Rules and Regulations (FRR) and internal controls (segregation of duties, competitive procurement, conflict-of-interest safeguards, vendor due diligence, IPSAS-compliant accounting).
  - Oversee implementing partner (IP) management under the HACT approach (micro-assessment, risk-based assurance, spot checks, programmatic visits, scheduled audits where required).
  - Ensure timely disbursement and liquidation procedures, cash forecasting, bank reconciliation, and asset management.

- **Safeguards and capacity support**
  - Operationalize SEA/SH (PSEA), child safeguarding, anti-fraud and anti-terrorism screening, and data-protection measures across all activities and partners.
  - Provide capacity development to MoET and decentralized structures on results monitoring, evidence use, procurement planning, and financial controls.

Coordinating agency role and responsibilities

The Coordinating Agency, SWANCEFA will serve as the neutral convener and facilitator of sector dialogue, alignment, and collective accountability, ensuring coherent partner coordination, transparent performance monitoring, and effective joint decision-making in support of the Partnership Compact and ESSP priorities.

- **Sector facilitation and alignment**
  - Facilitate inclusive sector dialogue and alignment among government, development partners, civil society, teachers' organizations, and private sector, ensuring that SCG activities support the Partnership Compact and ESSP priorities.
  - Convene and document LEG meetings, track action items, and steward joint communiqués and aide-mémoire for Joint Sector Reviews (JSR).

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- **Performance monitoring and issue-resolution**
  - Collate partner inputs for sector performance monitoring, highlight cross-cutting issues (e.g., equity, gender, disability), and help broker course-correction decisions.
  - Support donor mapping and harmonization, including updates to the alignment matrix and identification of opportunities for joint financing.

- **Communications and transparency**
  - Maintain an accessible document repository (plans, reports, M&E dashboards), publish meeting calendars/minutes, and ensure timely circulation of grant updates to LEG members.

Oversight - Local Education Group (LEG)

As LEG will provide governance support, strategic oversight facilitation, and accountability stewardship, ensuring that implementation of the System Capacity Grant remains aligned to sector priorities, is subject to regular performance review, and is managed within an effective risk and safeguards framework.

- **Governance and oversight**
  - Provide strategic oversight of SCG implementation against the approved results framework, ensuring coherence with the ESSP (2022–2034) and the Transformation Plan (2025–2035).
  - Review and endorse annual workplans and budgets, receive quarterly/biannual progress reports, and validate major reprogramming (scope, budget reallocation) within agreed thresholds.

- **Joint Sector Reviews and accountability**
  - Institutionalize annual JSRs to assess progress, analyze bottlenecks (e.g., teacher deployment, assessment rollout, data systems), and agree on priority actions with timelines and responsible units.
  - Uphold inclusive representation (Government, DPs, CSOs, teacher unions, private sector, learner representatives) and monitor attendance and participation metrics.

- **Risk and safeguards**
  - Review the risk register, PSEA compliance updates, and grievances log; require mitigating actions where risks are rated "High/Critical".

Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA)

The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) is an assessment body that is responsible for the development and administration of several examinations at the primary and secondary education levels. ECESWA was set up under the Ministry of Education and Training and is the sole examining body that is mandated to administer examinations and issue certificates to primary, junior secondary and senior secondary graduates in Eswatini. The organization was promulgated in 1984 through the Examinations Regulations of 1981. In 2023, Parliament transformed the organization into a State-owned enterprise through the Examinations Council of Eswatini Act of 2023.

ECESWA will serve as the lead government authority responsible for convening and coordinating all relevant partners to advance activities 3.3 and 3.5 in the programme.

In this role, ECESWA will bring together stakeholders from INSET, the Inspectorate, NCC, tertiary institutions, and training-of-trainers platforms to support the implementation of Activity 3.3, ensuring that the

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National Assessment Framework is effectively rolled out and aligned with the national curriculum to promote accurate and reliable evaluation of learning outcomes.

In parallel, ECESWA will lead collaborative processes under Activity 3.5 to develop the regulatory framework for the establishment of a National Assessment Unit within the Council, facilitating joint technical inputs, defining mandates and governance arrangements, and guiding the development of operational standards and implementation modalities that strengthen the national assessment system.

In-service Education and Training (INSET)

INSET is a key initiative under the Ministry of Education and Training, aimed at improving teacher quality through curriculum, content, and pedagogical mastery.

In the context of this System Capacity Grant, INSET will lead activity 2.1 focused on the development of the INSET teacher training manuals on financial management, instructional supervision, organization management, and curriculum implementation.

In addition, INSET will lead activity 2.2 on strengthening the capacity of INSET lecturers on Continuous Professional Development for teachers, the use of the teacher training manuals, and conducting online training.

Overall, INSET is the responsible entity to ensure that teachers are trained, in line with available and forthcoming frameworks that may result from the SCG programme.

The Inspectorate

The Inspectorate is a department within the Ministry of Education and Training responsible for quality assurance, ensuring schools adhere to national standards. Inspectors monitor teaching quality, enforce policies, support curriculum implementation, and conduct evaluations in primary and secondary.

The Inspectorate will lead activity 2.5 and 2.6 of this programme.

Component Leads

As part of the implementation arrangements, specific components of the grant will be assigned designated component leads, drawn from relevant departments within the Ministry of Education and Training or from key stakeholders across the education sector, depending on technical mandate and comparative advantage.

These component leads will be responsible for convening and coordinating multi-stakeholder task teams to deliver on the programme's outputs and milestones, ensuring that technical expertise is mobilized effectively and that implementation remains aligned with national priorities.

This structured approach will reinforce coordination across institutions, clarify roles and responsibilities, and strengthen accountability for achieving timely, high-quality results.

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Procurement and Financial Management Arrangements

In line with its fiduciary responsibilities, UNICEF will apply robust procurement, financial management, and record-keeping systems to ensure that all grant resources are used efficiently, transparently, and in full compliance with UNICEF regulations and GPE requirements.

- **Procurement**
  - All procurement follows UNICEF Supply Procedures: needs assessment, market research, competitive solicitation (RFQ/ITB/RFP as appropriate), technical/financial evaluation, and documented award decisions.
  - Vendor due diligence (sanctions and anti-terrorism screening), conflict-of-interest declarations, and contract management (deliverables, milestones, acceptance testing) are mandatory.
  - Use of Long-Term Arrangements (LTAs) where efficient; for specialized services (e.g., learning assessment), include clear *quality assurance* and *data security* clauses.

- **Financial management**
  - Funds are managed in line with UNICEF FRR, IPSAS accounting, and internal control frameworks: segregation of duties, bank reconciliations, imprest/cash forecasting, and asset registers.
  - Disbursements to government or IPs use HACT modality:
    - Micro-assessment to determine risk levels;
    - Assurance plan (spot checks, programmatic visits, and scheduled audits for high-risk partners);
    - FACE forms (or equivalent) for expenditure reporting and liquidation.
  - Periodic financial reporting aligns with GPE schedules and is shared with MoET and the LEG; external audit is conducted per grant agreement.

- **Recordkeeping and transparency**
  - Maintain auditable records (procurement files, contracts, vouchers, delivery/acceptance notes) for the period required under UNICEF policy and the grant agreement; enable third-party verification where requested.

REPORTING SCHEDULE TO GPE

Annual performance report Y1	September 2027
Annual performance report Y2	September 2028
Final performance report	June 2029

SAFEGUARDS AND OBLIGATIONS

Certain components of the grant may carry a risk of PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) because they involve direct interaction with stakeholders and beneficiaries, including activities such as:

- ✓ Capacity-building workshops and training sessions for government staff, teachers, and implementing partners.
- ✓ Field-level monitoring and data collection for EMIS strengthening and national learning assessments.
- ✓ Community engagement activities under sector coordination and cross-sectoral convening.

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These contexts create opportunities for abuse or exploitation if safeguards are not rigorously applied.

In response to these inherent risks, and in line with its responsibilities as Grant Agent, UNICEF will implement the following comprehensive safeguarding, accountability, and risk mitigation measures:

- **Policy framework and codes of conduct**
  - Enforce zero-tolerance for SEA/SH and child exploitation/abuse. All UNICEF staff, contractors, and IP personnel sign Codes of Conduct and PSEA commitments; clauses are embedded in all contracts and partnership agreements.
  - Ensure grievance and reporting mechanisms are communicated to beneficiaries and staff (confidential channels, non-retaliation, referral pathways).

- **Partner assessments and risk mitigation**
  - Conduct PSEA/child safeguarding capacity assessments of all Implementing Partners alongside HACT micro-assessments; categorize risk and define improvement plans (e.g., survivor-centred SOPs, focal points, safe recruitment/vetting).

- **Training and continuous assurance**
  - Deliver mandatory PSEA and child safeguarding training to UNICEF staff, MoET counterparts, and IP personnel (initial induction plus refreshers); include case management, safe referrals, and do-no-harm principles.
  - Integrate SEA/SH risk indicators and safeguards into supervision tools, spot checks, and programmatic visits; verify existence and use of complaints mechanisms at service delivery points.

- **Data protection and ethics**
  - Apply data-protection standards to all assessment and EMIS-related work (data minimization, informed consent, anonymization/pseudonymization where appropriate, secure storage, and controlled sharing).

- **Incident management and reporting**
  - Activate incident reporting within 24–72 hours for SEA/SH, fraud, or serious safeguarding breaches; notify GPE/MoET per the grant's notification protocol; implement remedial actions and document lessons learned.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The sustainability of the System Capacity Grant is anchored in the permanent institutionalization of its reforms within national systems, policies, and financing frameworks.

From the outset, the grant is designed to transition functions, capacities, and costs to the Ministry of Education and Training, ensuring that results endure well beyond the life of external financing.

Institutionalization of functions and financing

Sustainability will hinge on embedding SCG-supported processes into MoET's routine mandates and budgets. By the end of implementation, the Partnership Compact and LEG calendar will be institutionalized through ministerial circulars; responsibilities for coordination (agenda setting, action tracking, donor mapping) will be assigned to the MoET Coordination Unit, with line items in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).

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The National Learning Assessment System (LAS) will be anchored in MoET regulations specifying assessment grades, periodicity, sampling, and reporting and costed within ESSP annual operational plans.

Teacher Continuous Professional Development (CPD) modules on CBC, digital pedagogy, and inclusion will be integrated into Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and MoET's CPD monitoring information systems, with recurrent budgets for delivery and refreshers. These steps ensure activities continue as standard operating procedures, not grant-dependent projects.

Capacity and knowledge transfer

Routine mentorship, pairing MoET central staff with regional officers, will reinforce uptake at decentralized levels.

For data systems, standardized dashboards and quality assurance checklists will be owned by EMIS officers, with periodic peer reviews.

This human-capital approach builds enduring competencies that persist beyond the grant.

Policy alignment and incentive structures

Sustainability is strengthened when reforms are tied to clear incentives and accountability. Coordination outputs (Compact milestones, LEG decisions, JSR follow-through) will be embedded in MoET performance agreements.

Partnerships and gradual domestic takeover

Donor mapping and alignment will remain a LEG function, but with support from the *Aid Coordination and Management Sections* (Ministry of Economic Planning and Development) to track on-budget contributions, encouraging co-financing of assessment rounds and CPD cycles until full domestic absorption.

Private sector and civil society engagement, through the LEG, will continue to provide technical contributions under MoET leadership.

Annual costed workplans will progressively increase the share of domestic financing for (a) coordination secretariat costs, (b) CPD delivery, and (c) LAS logistics, targeting majority domestic funding within two cycles post-grant.

RISK MANAGEMENT MATRIX

Risk description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation measures
Insufficient domestic budget to sustain coordination, CPD, and LAS cycles	Medium	High	Embed recurrent costs in MTEF and ESSP annual plans; stagger LAS sampling to reduce unit costs; pursue pooled financing via LEG for interim support; demonstrate value through JSRs to secure MoF commitments.
Staff turnover and loss of institutional memory at MoET/regions	Medium	Medium-High	Institutionalize SOPs, templates, and repositories; maintain master-trainer networks; include sustainability clauses in HR performance frameworks; schedule annual refresher trainings funded domestically.
Weak adherence to Partnership Compact and LEG calendar (coordination fatigue)	Medium	Medium	Issue ministerial circulars mandating quarterly meetings; assign a permanent secretariat and action trackers; publish attendance and follow-up dashboards; link compliance to departmental performance reviews.
Data quality slippage in EMIS and LAS (affecting evidence use)	Medium	High	Establish quality assurance protocols, spot checks, and peer reviews; maintain a light external validation in early post-grant years; integrate Washington Group disability standards; require data-use briefs for policy submissions.
Procurement delays affecting assessment and CPD scheduling	Medium	Medium	Pre-approve LTAs for critical services; maintain annual procurement plans; train procurement staff on timeline management; include contingency windows in workplans.
Stakeholder disengagement (private sector, CSOs, learner reps) from LEG processes	Low-Medium	Medium	Update LEG TORs with clear roles; maintain inclusive agenda; provide orientation for new members; publish meeting minutes and action status to sustain transparency and trust.
Equity backsliding in teacher deployment once incentives lapse	Medium	High	Codify hardship/incentive policy with stable budget lines; monitor equity index via EMIS; conduct annual deployment reviews; publicize regional performance to sustain accountability.
PSEA/child safeguarding compliance weakens post-grant	Low-Medium	High	Make PSEA training mandatory in MoET HR induction; include PSEA clauses in all MoET/IP contracts; maintain confidential reporting channels; schedule periodic audits and spot checks.
Policy inertia—LAS findings not used for curriculum/CPD updates	Medium	Medium-High	Formalize requirement for LAS evidence in curriculum/CPD revision SOPs; task a standing evidence review committee; track and publish "evidence-to-action" changes in annual reports.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Eswatini SCG Programme Results Framework

Annex 2 - Eswatini SCG Budget

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