

ESPIG Annual Progress Report Template for Projects

Status: Accepted

Country Eritrea	Name of project this grant is contributing to Eritrea ESPIG	Grant ID GPE0000334	Project ID (if applicable) SC200089
Grant Agent United Nations Children's Fund	Grant Type ESPIG	Approval Date 01/08/2020	Grant Effectiveness / Start Date 01/08/2020
Expected Closing Date 12/31/2024	Grant Amount 17,200,000 (USD)	Timeframe Examined in this report From Date 12/31/2022	Date of Report Submission 03/04/2024
		To Date 12/30/2023	

Implementation Progress

Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

Overall Progress this Reporting Period ¹

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Previous Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

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

(i) Major accomplishments in this reporting period: Jan - Dec 2023

Despite the late kick off of the GPE programme, significant progress has been made in the 2023. USD 9,419,123.66 has been disbursed to MOE and the programme has a total utilization of USD 10,137,365.59 equivalent to 58% of the total grant. USD 1,769,046.83 has been liquidated.

Majority of non-construction related procurement has been completed and is currently in the process of being distributed and implemented. Procurement includes learning materials and blackboards, play based learning materials for early childhood education, material incentives for vulnerable children, ICT equipment and solar power systems for MoE administration at zoba and sub zoba level as well as the EMIS and research departments, equipment for reestablishment of 6 ECCE resource centers and reading rooms. In addition to the solid progress on procurement of supplies, printing of 1,285,220 textbooks has been undertaken and is nearly finalized. In terms of systems strengthening and data, the large-scale learning assessment Measuring Learning Achievements (MLA) V was successfully rolled out and data collection completed. Extensive technical support was provided to the MLA team to enhance the data analysis capacity and ensure a high-quality product. Following a lengthy process of enhancing the classroom design to make it more sustainable and disability friendly, MOUs for construction works have been completed in the four targeted zobas and a procurement request for construction supplies has been submitted to the central procurement agency.

In 2022, the government revised the directives on project management. As per the new directives all operating costs and allowances are to be covered by government budget and requested by respective line ministries through their annual budget requests. The directive has led to a cost saving of USD 6,920,870.80 for the programme as all training components are to be covered by government funding. In August 2023, the MOE rolled out the planned in-service training fully funded by the government and more than 4,400 teachers were trained. The cost savings led to a modification request of the programme to cover the increased cost of classrooms as well as additional construction including a new School for the Deaf. A request was also made for 12 months extension. The programme modification request was approved

by GPE in December 2023.

Over the course of 2023, MOE and UNICEF have been able to operationalize the government's commitments to address the learning crisis through identification of the reform area "Enhanced Learning for All Girls and Boys in Eritrea and the finalization of the Enabling Factors Analysis, the Eritrea Partnership Compact and the Programme Outline as well as the development of the full Programme Document for the SCG, STC and GEA grants which will be submitted to GPE in March 2024.

Throughout the year, UNICEF has provided additional support to MOE to participate in the Regional Scale-up of Early Childhood Education workshop and subsequently provided expert support for MOE to perform an ECE sector diagnostics and develop a roadmap for scale up of ECE services. MOE has been supported to participate in a regional Learning Journey to Zambia to learn firsthand how the TaRL methodology has been implemented to address learning poverty and improve learning outcomes. Subsequently UNICEF provided support for a MOE/UNICEF team from Zambia to come to Eritrea to further engage in peer-to-peer learning on the subject. This has led to the design of the Sector Wide Remedial FLN programme in Eritrea. Lastly, continuous support has been provided to MOE to engage in the preparatory work leading up to the African Union Year of Education, and for the DCP focal point to join the DCP Annual Constituency meeting in Tanzania.

ii) Implementation challenges or delays the project experienced this reporting period the reasons behind these issues; how (well) these have been mitigated thus far; and what remains to be done by whom and by when to address the challenges:

The teacher training component was significantly delayed due to the revised government directives on project management. There was a period of some confusion where it seemed a waiver was provided, and UNICEF transferred the funds for the training to commence. However, eventually the government decided to retract the waiver and proceed with the teacher training utilizing government funds. The teacher training commenced, and more than 4,400 teachers enrolled in the various courses during the summer break. For certificate and diploma level training teachers will continue for two and three summers respectively. The unspent funds were part of the programme modification request and will be utilized for construction instead. In accordance with UNICEF HACT guidelines, MOE will be formally requesting for reprogramming of the funds. This is expected in quarter 1 of 2024.

Construction has been significantly delayed due to the lengthy process of revising the design. The revision led to a substantial cost increase per classrooms from USD 17,900 to around USD 30,000. Due to the implications of the increased cost, approval to proceed with the revised design was sought from GPE. This was granted informally in February 2023 and formally through the modification request in December. With the approval of the programme modification request, the procurement order for all construction materials has been placed at the central procurement agency and the MOE is committed to expedite the construction process to finish within the 12 months extension. Given the magnitude of the construction and the relative short time frame, UNICEF as GA continues to closely monitor progress and conduct regular meetings with the Programme Management Unit (PMU) of MOE. Likewise, the good practice of regular tripartite meetings between MOE, UNICEF and Ministry of Finance and National Development (MFND) will continue.

Since the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation framework (SDCF) 2022-2026 was agreed and signed off, MFND has provided stronger guidance and quarterly review sessions of the Joint Work Plan 2022-2023. This is improving the collaboration and implementation of programmes. The regular dialogue across MFND, line ministries and UN agencies provides an opportunity to jointly raise concerns, seek guidance and expedite implementation. This is also the forum where procurement challenges can be raised as it is not only affected the education sector.

(iii) Factors that led to any upgrade/downgrade in the progress rating above, compared with the previous reporting period (if any):

In 2023 the programme has achieved an upgrade in progress rating compared to the year before. This is due to the significant progress in funds disbursement (58%) against the 60% by August target agreed with GPE in February 2023; significant supply procurement; commencement of planned activities including in-service teacher training; and the successful modification request which will unlock the remaining part of the programme to be implemented in 2024.

(iv) Whether any progress was made in mitigating previous reporting periods' challenges or delays (if any):

The challenges outlined above were the same in the previous reporting period and as such the action taken to resolve them in this reporting period remains relevant.

(v) Describe priority actions planned for the following year to overcome constraints, build on achievements and partnerships, and use the lessons learned during the reporting period:

A key priority for 2024, is intensive and high level follow up on procurement of construction materials to ensure timely completion of the planned construction activities. Likewise direct technical engineering support will be provided to the groundbreaking and preparatory construction works.

Close monitoring of distribution and implementation will be carried out through joint monitoring missions between MOE and UNICEF. Majority of supply procurement and textbook printing was finalized in 2023 and distribution and implementation to reach the schools and children is the immediate next step.

Continued technical engagement with MOE on teacher training will continue to maintain the momentum gained. To ensure delivery of relevant training to pre-primary certificate teachers, continued advocacy and technical support will be provided to enhance the training package.

Intensified PMU meetings and tripartite meetings with the MoE and MFND have proved helpful in building mutual accountability, information sharing and finding joint solutions unlocking persistent bottlenecks helping us move forward though slowly. These will be continued in 2024 to pave the way for continued progress and completion of the programme.

In 2023, Eritrea has benefitted from three GPE Secretariat missions. The missions are helpful to build mutual trust, resolve bottlenecks, provide guidance and encourage the progress of the programme implementation. In-country missions by the GPE Country Lead in 2024 will be crucial.

Project Implementation Progress, by Component / Objective

Component / Objective	Level of Progress this Reporting Period 2	Previous Rating
Improve access and equity	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

In the four targeted zobas, MOUs for classroom construction have been signed including 64 ECCE classrooms, 62 elementary classrooms, and 63 middle level classrooms. In total 189 classrooms. With the approved modification request additional 18 toilets, 10 teachers' quarters and a school for the deaf will further be constructed. The MOU amendment will take place in quarter 1 of 2024. The procurement order for all construction materials has been submitted to the centralized procurement agency.

Procurement of learning materials is completed for pre-primary students in 64 ECE classrooms, 510 blackboards for CEE and adult literacy classes and material incentives are procured for 1,500 CEE students. Funds for cash-based incentive schemes for 2,250 girls has been transferred to the zobas and will be distributed in quarter 1 of 2024.

Component / Objective	Level of Progress this Reporting Period 2	Previous Rating
Improve quality and relevance	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

Printing of 1,285,220 textbooks has commenced and is nearly finalized. This includes 640,720 copies of 210 different books for primary level that will help the students in schools of the disadvantaged communities to improve the quality of learning they will get by improving the ratio of the textbooks among the students. The books for primary level are being printed in the various local languages to ensure mother tongue education. In addition, 534,500 copies of 38 different curriculum materials for middle level, 50,000 copies of Adult Literacy/CEE books in 7 of the local languages and also 10,000 copies of

National Standards for Quality Education manuals have been printed.

Procurement has been completed to equip and revamp 6 ECCE Recourse Centers and furniture has been procured to open 12 new community reading rooms. Audio visual equipment has been procured to revitalize MOE's recording studio and extensive technical training in radio production will be provided by MOH and UNICEF in quarter 1 of 2024.

During the summer holiday, 2,024 teachers started their upgrading programme to certificate level and 813 teachers and directors started their upgrading to diploma level. Additionally, 1,575 teachers and school directors underwent shorter term training programmes in topics ranging from education planning, school record management, special needs education and ICT. As per the new Government guideline, the cost of teacher training program was covered from the government budget.

Component / Objective	Level of Progress this Reporting Period 2	Previous Rating
System capacity and development	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

In 2023, the fifth round of the large-scale sample-based learning assessment MLA-V was rolled out for grades three and five. There were 83 sample schools and 4,797 students taking part in the exercise. Using a probability of sampling technique, the sample size was determined to be 2,244 and 2,248 respectively for grades 3 and 5. (Here the margin of error e=0.03, design effect deft=1.95 and non-response rate r=.9 were taken). After determining the cluster intake, 83 schools were taken to be the sampled schools. Preliminary results show that more children are not at grade-appropriate learning levels. The results of the MLA-V will provide the basis for the MOE's work on transforming the education sector and enhancing learning outcomes. To enhance the quality and complexity of the MLA data analysis, UNICEF has provided comprehensive expert support (in-country and remote) to strengthen the capacity of MLA team.

In Q1 2024 the preliminary results of the assessment were released showing improved learning outcomes with the average mean score increasing to 54.2 and 54.3 at grade 3 and 5 respectively. In comparison results from MLA-IV (2018) were 47.9 and 45.6.

As per the EMIS development plan, MOE has in 2023 procured ICT and solar power equipment to support digitization of the data collection process. The equipment will be installed in 2024 and is expected to facilitate a timelier data collection and analysis process.

Component / Objective	Level of Progress this Reporting Period 2	Previous Rating
Cross cutting issues	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

A part of the planned trainings in the areas of Special Needs Education (SNE) took place during the government funded summer school training. A total of 397 teachers were trained. In addition to this, a new boarding school for deaf children will be constructed in 2024 as part of the approved programme modification.

To ensure equitable access to ICT services with solar power systems in remote rural schools and education offices, procurement of ICT and solar power equipment for schools and sub-zoba offices has been completed and is in the process of being installed.

Procurement of Education in Emergencies kits are in process but good have not yet arrived.

Progress on the variable part

Variable Part Reporting Template

From To

Dimension Equity	Level of Progress this Reporting Period	Previous Rating NA	
Indicator	Baseline	Target for Reporting period	Achievement for Reporting Period
Actual Amount Utilized (in (USD) for Reporting Period	Proportion (%) of actual amount utilized to the planned allocation for the reporting period	Cumulative Amount Utilized (in (USD) for Reporting Period	Proportion (%) of cumulative amount utilized to the total allocation for the given VP indicator.
Evidence of achievements (e.g., independent verification report) and request for payout. Please add description in the field below and attach relevant documents.			

Dimension Learning	Level of Progress this Reporting Period	Previous Rating NA	
Indicator	Baseline	Target for Reporting period	Achievement for Reporting Period
Actual Amount Utilized (in (USD) for Reporting Period	Proportion (%) of actual amount utilized to the planned allocation for the reporting period	Cumulative Amount Utilized (in (USD) for Reporting Period	Proportion (%) of cumulative amount utilized to the total allocation for the given VP indicator.
Evidence of achievements (e.g., independent verification report) and request for payout. Please add description in the field below and attach relevant documents.			

Dimension Efficiency	Level of Progress this Reporting Period	Previous Rating NA	
Indicator	Baseline	Target for Reporting period	Achievement for Reporting Period
Actual Amount Utilized (in (USD) for Reporting Period	Proportion (%) of actual amount utilized to the planned allocation for the reporting period	Cumulative Amount Utilized (in (USD) for Reporting Period	Proportion (%) of cumulative amount utilized to the total allocation for the given VP indicator.
Evidence of achievements (e.g., independent verification report) and request for payout. Please add description in the field below and attach relevant documents.			

Lessons, innovative/promising practices

During the reporting period we continued the monthly tripartite meetings between MOE, MFND and UNICEF. The ownership of these meetings is now fully with the government, and they have proved very useful in resolving bottlenecks.

Likewise joint field missions between MOE, MFND and UNICEF has shown to expedite problem solving and liquidation of funds and will be intensified during 2023 to expedite implementation.

Impact stories

We have produced 5 stories in 2023-24. Kindly see links below:

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES:

Nisrit speaks about teachers' commitment in education– Resident of Filfele District and Mother of 5
 June 29,2023 <https://youtu.be/bhNCn0a8OG4>

Our school is close to our home - Hayat, Grade 8 student Kar’Obel Primary & Middle School
 June 22,2023 <https://youtu.be/yW3rBxSvSro>

I love to teach children and treat them as if they are my own |Nura Edrees Teacher Testimony
 June 19, 2023 <https://youtu.be/QkkQLHjrOCI>

Global Partnership for Education visits Eritrea |Education for All |UNICEF Eritrea
 June 9, 2023 <https://youtu.be/Hd3p21yhHUM>

A Journey of Empowerment Inclusive Education in Ghindae, Eritrea / Advancing disability inclusion for children with disabilities in Eritrea
 January 24, 2014 <https://youtu.be/aPZOCuSL4M0>

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

#	File Name	Document Type	Description
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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
17,200,000	10,220,190	59.42	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.

As per agreement with GPE Secretariat, the programme was to reach 60% disbursement by August 2023. The programme reached 58% which was considered acceptable.

The programme has undergone a modification replacing teacher training and research components (soft components) with construction. In addition the programme has been extended with 12 months

Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period

12,892,220

Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period

5,850,808

Explanation for underspending or overspending in excess of 10%

As indicated in the reporting the programme had a slow start, but is now picking up speed. The funds transferred to MOE in 2023 was the maximum amount we could send while preparing the modification request. Now that the modification and no cost extension request has been approved, we can commence the funds transfer in 2024.

Management Performance

Level of Management Performance

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Previous Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Detailed Description

Explain below how these management arrangements/duties have affected, positively or negatively, the implementation of the grant and its progress toward achieving results/outcomes. Note any management-related issues or shortcomings during the period under review, and how these have been/are being remediated. Why or why not?:

As outlined above in the section on challenges several external factors have caused a delay to the timely implementation of the ESPIG. Throughout the reporting year, UNICEF as Grant Agent has continued to engage with the Government of Eritrea to resolve the issues.

UNICEF as the grant Agent is following its internal financial management system Harmonized Cash Transfer Approach (HACT) to ensure appropriate management of the grant. UNICEF continues to engage with MOE, PMU and MFND on a day-to-day basis as well as through the institutionalized monthly tripartite meetings to share information on GPE and UNICEF rules and regulations to inform and facilitate decision making as well as support and seek dialogue on resolving existing bottlenecks to the implementation.

UNICEF continues to engage the GPE Country Lead for Eritrea to update on progress and challenges as well as seeking guidance when needed to further inform decision making.

Revisions to the grant

This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the GPE Board or Secretariat for their approval?

No

How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the GPE Board or Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?

Moderately Likely

Detailed Description

The pending construction is scheduled to be completed in 12 months, but this will depend on timely procurement of construction materials by the government

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym

Description

Annex 2: Global Numbers Reporting Template

Provide the data related to GPE's three global numbers for this reporting period below:

- Textbooks purchased and distributed
- Teachers trained
- Classrooms built or rehabilitated

Note: For cofinanced grants, please provide the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 50 percent of a teacher training activity, the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant for the number of teachers trained through that activity would be 50%.if the unit of analysis in the indicator is the number of schools and not classrooms, please enter an estimated number of classrooms and provide an explanation in the comments box.

GPE Indicators

Textbooks purchased and distributed

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)	Comments
1	# of textbooks printed	474,200	100	The procurement order for 1,285,220 textbooks has been submitted and as of end Dec 2023, 474,200 were printed and submitted to MOE warehouse

GPE Indicators

Teachers trained

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)	Comments
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1	# of teachers trained	4,412	0	4,412 teachers were trained through the government led and funded in-service summer programme. The training included a teacher certification program to 2,024 (F: 977) untrained and serving teachers, teacher upgrading program to diploma level to 813 (F: 165) certificate level teachers and a short-term in-service training to 1,575 (F: 650) teachers and School Directors on a variety of themes ranging from education planning, school record management, special needs education and ICT.
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GPE Indicators

Classrooms built or rehabilitated

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)	Comments
1	# of classrooms constructed	0	0	No data available as of reporting deadline due to delayed implementation. 189 classrooms are to be constructed as well as toilets in 18 schools and 10 teachers residence quarters in middle schools

Annex 3: Cumulative Beneficiary Children Reporting Template

Provide the cumulative number of children (both in school and out of school) who directly participated in project activities, received project-supported incentives or services, or benefited from project interventions so far. Also provide relevant disaggregated values by sex (applicable to all grants). If appropriate and available, provide disaggregated values by varied subgroups and by education level. Reporting beneficiary data cumulatively means counting all beneficiaries as a running total, adding up all beneficiaries since the start of the grant and up to the end of this reporting period. Data on beneficiaries are to be collected using the methods and tools proper to each project. It is understood that some disaggregated data will only be collected if a project expressly targets specific subgroups through their interventions and uses their own methods for counting beneficiary children/other students.

NOTE: For cofinanced grants, please provide the numbers for the entire program and indicate the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 40 percent of the program that is cofinanced by GPE and other donors, enter 40% in the "% attributed to this grant."

	Pre-primary (optional)	Primary (optional)	Secondary (optional)	Others (optional)	Total	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)
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Number of children who directly benefited from the project so far:

Of which, girls:

Of which, children with a disability (optional):

Of which, refugee children (optional):

Of which, internally displaced children (optional):

Of which, out-of-school children, in school age (optional):

Of which, children from marginalized ethno-cultural/ linguistic minorities: specify which ones (optional):

Provide any comments on beneficiary children, if needed. This could include for example: the definition employed by the project for a particular subgroup (including a more granular description of these subgroups), the approach/tool used to calculate the number of beneficiaries overall or by subgroup, any limitation of the approach/tool employed for this calculation, and reasons why data on beneficiary children is unavailable. Please provide the number or proportion of girls for varied subgroups in the comment section below, if available.

In 2023 the procurement of majority of supplies has been completed while all procurement related to construction is in process. Implementation of the supplies has not yet rolled out and thus there are not yet any direct beneficiaries (children) who have been reached.

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

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