

# CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE: JULY 29, 2024

<b>TO:</b> Laura Frigenti, CEO	
<b>SUBJECT:</b> Sao Tome and Principe: allocation for system transformation grant and Girls' Education Accelerator grant	
Country	Sao Tome and Principe
System transformation grant (STG) allocation	US\$2.5 million
Girls' Education Accelerator (GEA) allocation	US\$1.25 million
Allocation requested (100%)	STG: US\$2.5 million (100%) <sup>1</sup> GEA: US\$1.25 million (100%)
Allocation recommended by Secretariat	STG: US\$2.5 million GEA: US\$1.25 million
Results based financing	No
Grant agent	World Bank
Agency fee (% and amount)	1.75%, US\$65,625
Period	2 years, 3.5 months
Expected start date	September 15, 2024
Closing date	December 31, 2026
Total financing of the Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All (PEREQT) program	IDA co-financing: US\$15 million (approved in 2020) GPE ESPIG: US\$2.5 million (approved in 2020) GPE STG: US\$2.5 million GPE GEA: US\$1.25 million

## Action request

This memo requests approval for an allocation from the GPE trust funds for a system transformation grant (STG), and a Girls' Education Accelerator (GEA) grant in support of the existing co-financed IDA/GPE program: Projeto Empoderamento de Raparigas e Educaçao de Qualidade para Todos / Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All (PEREQT) program in Sao Tome and Principe (STP), as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table above, subject to: a) Availability of funds and b) Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for grants in annual installments.

## Grant Summary

The STG-GEA is proposed as an additional financing to the GPE Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG of US\$2.5 million) which co-finances the PEREQT program approved in 2020 with total financing of US\$17.5 million. The Project Development Objective seeks to empower girls and tackle learning poverty in STP, especially among the most vulnerable. The proposal for this additional STG/GEA financing of US\$3.75 million remains aligned with the partnership compact which has an overarching focus on equity and inclusion.

<sup>1</sup> This amount includes US\$93,750 for grant agent implementation support costs.

GPE financing will support scale-up of core activities and expand the number of beneficiaries, including 1) continuation of comprehensive sexuality education program and adolescent clubs reaching an additional 1,500 students (grades 7-9), accounting for around 9% of STP's middle school age population; 2) rehabilitation of WASH facilities and adaptation of school infrastructure for special needs students in two additional prioritized schools; 3) development of pilot educational projects to prevent school violence in seven schools; 4) Special Education – acquisition of equipment and operation of the Specialized Service Center; and 5) EMIS – acquisition of equipment, inventory survey, and training. The program will also support activities preventing school violence, delivery of structured pedagogy and the operationalization of the reforms to the teaching career progression policy and teaching career statutes. The additional financing and activities have been consulted with and endorsed by the Local Education Group.

### Current Portfolio

Grant Type	Grant Amount (in USD)	Amount Utilized (%)	Grant Agent	Closing Date	Latest Rating
Education Sector Program Implementation Grant	2,500,000	2,056,775 (82%)	World Bank	October 31, 2024	Satisfactory

The ongoing US\$2.5 million ESPIG is co-financed by an IDA credit of US\$15 million under PEREQT program. It fosters a safer school environment by strengthening girls' and boys' clubs and WASH facilities, financing teacher profession development, and providing teaching and learning materials. The program faced delays due to COVID-19, weak government capacity and shifts in leadership during the first two years. Implementation has greatly accelerated since the mid-term review and a restructuring of the program which was approved by the GPE Secretariat in September 2023. Since the program's midterm review, ratings for overall implementation progress and for each project component have been upgraded. Notable advancements in both implementation and disbursement have been achieved from late 2023 to the end of FY24. The ESPIG is now expected to be effectively completed by the closing date, October 31, 2024.

### Board decision on strategic parameters

The Board approved the strategic parameters for GPE support to Sao Tome and Principe in September 2023. The partnership compact's priority reform is to "improve equity and inclusion in access and learning outcomes from pre-primary through secondary education including vocational technical education." The government was invited to apply for a STG and a GEA grant. It was recommended that the grant program prioritizes a small number of activities identified in the compact. The Government and partners responded by focusing grant programs on removing barriers to access and quality in pre-primary and basic education.

Of the four enabling factor areas, domestic financing (volume, equity, and efficiency) was assessed as high priority as it poses a significant barrier to system transformation. SCG funds of US\$800,000 (not yet accessed) will permit the government to carry out strategies to address this enabling factor, such as conducting a Public Expenditure Review (PER) and strengthening use of EMIS to enhance

monitoring and accountability. Financing data from the PER and EMIS will strengthen advocacy on the importance of quality and equitable education and enhance coordination with the Ministry of Finance.

### **Significant Opportunities**

The proposed activities will embed innovations into the system. The program's interventions, particularly the focus on sexual education and changing attitudes and social norms, as well as the potential of the curricular focus at the preschool level and beyond, have potential for outcomes at scale and help to consolidate existing partnerships such as with UNFPA, civil society and UNICEF. The GEA will challenge harmful social norms in vulnerable communities by integrating anti-violence activities into girls' and boys' clubs and engaging communities in the design of the response action plan, expanding the scope of activities beyond the school grounds. Lessons learned from these activities could be shared with neighboring countries. In addition, the program will build on gender equality achievements from previous ESPIG investments. For example, a code of conduct for teachers developed under PEREQT will be institutionalized and systematized in the STG-GEA program to promote gender equality and to reduce Gender Based Violence in school settings.

There are further opportunities to ensure that the measures focusing on tackling learning poverty (under Component 2) integrate a gender responsive approach. For instance, ensuring that gender is hardwired in tools such as the TEACH classroom observation instrument should be seized by the grant agent and government.

### **Significant Issues and Risks:**

The slow hiring of qualified staff has been identified as a fiduciary risk. Assistance from the Program Fiduciary and Administrative Agency to the Ministry in carrying out fiduciary activities has been noted as a positive mitigation measure. SEAH risk was assessed as high. A specialist has joined the project management unit to monitor SEAH risk and implement mitigation activities.

Monitoring of the partnership compact beyond the scope of this program will be strengthened by annual Joint Sector Reviews and a monitoring working group to be supported through an existing SCG. Strategies to strengthen coordination encourage key partners to align around implementation of initiatives identified in the partnership compact, but not funded through GPE grants, such as TVET.

### **Recommendation**

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that the **RM recommends to the CEO the approval of a system transformation grant in the amount of US\$2.5 million and a Girls' Education Accelerator grant in the amount of US\$1.25 million for Sao Tome and Principe with the World Bank as Grant Agent.**

### **RECOMMENDED DECISION**

**Grant:** System Transformation Grant and Girls' Education Accelerator Grant

**Country:** Sao Tome and Principe

### **CEO/2024/31-07-2024**

The CEO in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors approves the System Transformation Grant in the amount of US\$2.5 million and the Girls' Education Accelerator grant in the amount of

US\$1.25 million for Sao Tome and Principe plus an additional US\$65,625 in agency fees to World Bank as the grant agent, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table above, subject to:

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

Date : July 31, 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Frigenti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

Laura Frigenti, CEO