COMOROS EDUCATION SECTOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GRANT ALLOCATION: REPORT FROM THE GRANTS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

For Decision

Please note: Board papers are deliberative in nature and, in accordance with the GPE Transparency Policy, are not public documents until the Board has considered them. It is understood that constituencies will circulate Board documents among their members prior to Board consideration for consultation purposes.

1. STRATEGIC PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to request the Board to approve an allocation for an education sector program implementation grant (ESPIG) to Comoros, as recommended by the Grants and Performance Committee (GPC) following its discussion of the grant application during its April 10-12, 2018 meeting.

2. RECOMMENDED DECISION

2.1. The GPC recommends the Board approve the following decision:

BOD/2018/05-XX–Approval of Allocation for an Education Sector Program Implementation Grant to Comoros: The Board of Directors with respect to the application submitted in the first round of 2018:

1. Notes compliance with the requirements for accessing the maximum country allocation, as described in the application and summarized and assessed in Annex 2 to BOD/2018/04 DOC 05.

2. Approves an allocation from GPE trust funds for an education sector program implementation grant (ESPIG), as described in the application and summarized in Table 1 in BOD/2018/05-XX 2 (c), subject to:
   a. Availability of funds.
   b. Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for ESPIGs in annual installments.
   c. GPC recommendations for funding include (all amounts in US$):
Table 1 Application Summary and GPC Allocation Recommendations for an ESPIG in US$:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comoros</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Maximum Country Allocation</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Allocation Requested (100%)</td>
<td>2,300,000 ¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fixed Part Requested</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Variable Part Requested</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Allocation Recommended by GPC</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Grant Agent</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Agency Fee % - Amount</td>
<td>8% - 184,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Period</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Expected Start Date</td>
<td>July 1, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Variable Part Disbursement Modality</td>
<td>Ex-Ante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Funding Source</td>
<td>GPE Fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Requests the Secretariat to:
   a. Include in its notification to Comoros, the relevant grant agent and coordinating agency, for distribution to the local education group (LEG) of the approval of the allocation and the expected timeframe for signing of the Grant Agreement and grant effectiveness, as applicable, the conditions, requests for report-back, and observations on the program as recommended by the GPC and set out in Annex 1 to BOD/2018/04 DOC 05.
   b. Include an update on the issues listed as “conditions” and “report back” in the annual Portfolio Review in accordance with the specified timeline.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Committee assessed the grant application from Comoros and discussed whether it met the funding model requirements to access the maximum country allocation (MCA). In accordance with its delegated authority to approve ex-ante approaches for prospective applicants upon request,² the Grants and Performance Committee via non-objection decision in December 2017 approved an ex-ante approach for Comoros.

3.2 The rationale for approval of the ex-ante approach was based on the government and development partners’ acknowledgement that the variable part could potentially boost the

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¹ Includes US$313,038 for the cost of the grant agent to perform its roles and responsibilities (formerly supervision fees). Per decision BOD/2015/10-02 supervision fees are funded from the maximum country allocation effective from the second funding round of 2016.
² Board decision BOD/2014/05-02 – Operational Framework for Requirements and Incentives
implementation of key reforms but that given the small MCA, the variable part transaction costs were assessed as high relative to the results that could be otherwise achieved through an ex-ante approach. In addition, the Committee noted that the grant program is aligned with Comoros Transitional Education Plan, which demonstrates strategies in the education sector that promote the funding model’s variable part dimensions of equity, efficiency and learning, in line with the requirements of an ex-ante approach.

3.3 Because of the ex-ante approach, Comoros’s MCA does not include a variable part and the assessment by the GPC was based on whether the country met the fixed part requirements and the quality standards of the proposed program.

3.4 Prior to the discussion, the following conflict of interest was disclosed:

- Atif Rafique, UNICEF, as representative of the grant agent for the proposed program.

3.5 The GPC had a rich discussion regarding the application and found that Comoros met the requirements. The primary discussion points are summarized in Annex 1. The evidence for meeting the requirements and quality standards is set out in Annex 2.

4. **PLEASE CONTACT** Margarita Focas Licht ([mlicht@globalpartnership.org](mailto:mlicht@globalpartnership.org)) for further information.

5. **ANNEXES**

5.1 This paper includes the following annexes:

- Annex 1 – GPC Observations, Report-Backs, and Conditions
- Annex 2 – Secretariat Quality Assurance Review Phase 3 (Final Readiness Review)

5.2 The following is available on the [Committee eTeam site](https):

- Comoros ESPIG Application Package (GPC/2018/04 DOC 10)
## ANNEX 1 – GPC OBSERVATIONS, REPORT-BACKS, AND CONDITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comoros</th>
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<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>The Committee appreciated the application, which the Committee considered relevant to the national context and well aligned with the national transitional education plan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Report-Backs</td>
<td>The Committee noted certain needs for improvement in the results framework and was encouraged to note that work is underway to improve the robustness of the framework. The Committee requests that the Secretariat is notified by the coordinating agency once the baseline study is completed. With regard to domestic financing, the Committee requests the coordinating agency and development partners to support the ministry in the design and implementation of a methodology for disaggregating education expenditures by sub-sector and the local education group (LEG) to report back annually via the joint sector review on the share of the recurrent budget for education allocated to primary education. The Committee appreciates the measures on inclusive education in the framework of the grant program and encourages the government and its partners to mobilize the technical and financial resources required for implementing additional measures so as to promote a learning environment that is more inclusive for all children, including those with physical as well as cognitive disabilities. The Committee requests the LEG to report back annually on sector activities implemented and outcomes noted in the area of inclusive education via joint sector reviews. The Committee strongly supports the development of a pooled fund for education by 2020 as referenced in the 2018-2020 transitional education plan to harmonize support for education and reduce transaction costs related to the management of education funds. The Committee looks forward to receiving an update on the development of this fund through the annual joint sector review. The Committee notes that in multilingual systems such as in Comoros, results in education improve if the mother tongue is used in the curriculum and in classrooms, especially in the early grades. The Committee therefore looks forward to receiving information from the LEG, through the coordinating agency, whether this is planned for and more details on the ambition in this regard. Given the importance of conducting an education sector analysis to evaluate the implementation of the current sector plan and inform the development of the next sector plan, the Committee is pleased that a full sector analysis is planned for 2019 and requests to be kept informed by the coordinating agency of the implementation of this activity. Similarly, the Committee is pleased to learn that joint sector reviews are being organized for 2018 and 2020 and a mid-term review in 2019 and requests that the Secretariat is notified by the coordinating agency when these meetings are scheduled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>N/a</td>
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Quality education for all children
ANNEX 2 – SECRETARIAT QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW PHASE 3 (FINAL READINESS REVIEW)

Quality Assurance Review – Phase 3

Proposed GPE Grant Amount: US$2.3 million
Ex-ante approach approved by the GPC (December 22, 2017)
Agent’s Implementation Support Costs: US$ 0.31 million;
Implementation period: 3 years
Projected implementation start date: July 1, 2018
Grant Agent: UNICEF

1. BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION SECTOR OVERVIEW

1.1 COUNTRY BACKGROUND

The Union of the Comoros is a republic located in southern Africa. It has a surface area of 2,236 km² and is made up of the islands of Moheli, Anjouan, Grande-Comore and Mayotte. Following independence in 1975, Mayotte remained under French sovereignty. Over the past few decades, the country has been beset by political and institutional instability, with a series of coups d’état up until 2001, followed by a process of reconciliation, as evidenced by the peaceful federal elections in 2006, 2010 and 2016, and a system of rotating presidency between the country’s islands. However, the Comoros is still deemed to be a fragile country. While the islands have wide-ranging autonomy to implement national policy in a number of areas, including education, the system of governance remains complex, with numerous administrative entities operating at the central level and within the autonomous islands.

In 2015, the total population was estimated at 785,000, with this number projected to rise by 14 percent by 2020. The demographic dependency rate of persons between the ages of 6-18 years was estimated at 34 percent in 2015, a percentage that is still below the average for the African continent.

The Comoros is a low-income country and ranks among the poorest in the world. In 2012, more than a third (34 percent) of the population lived below the poverty threshold, as against 45 percent in 2004. However, this downward trend masks certain disparities: The island of Moheli saw a 1.8 percentage point increase in the level of poverty over the same period. Furthermore, there was a 12-percentage point decrease in the number of poor people in urban areas, compared to a 9-point drop in the number of rural poor.

The primary and tertiary sectors are the mainstay of the economy, while the secondary sector has remained dormant and reduced to the bare minimum as far as manufacturing industries are concerned.

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5 National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies (INSEED)
6 Survey on the informal sector and the labor market, 2012
1.2 EDUCATION SECTOR OVERVIEW

1.2.1 Learning outcomes

In 2008-2009, the Comoros participated in the PASEC international student assessment test, which showed that for the second year of primary school, the country’s score placed it more or less within the median, relative to that of other countries. The majority of pupils in the fifth year of the primary cycle scored lower than the median for French and mathematics, which therefore placed Comoros among the countries with pupils underperforming in those subjects and closer to the category with the lowest scores. An analysis of national examinations also reveals that for the most part, pupils performed below the required levels. The general average score for the Comoros at entry to the sixth grade as a whole is therefore marginally higher than 10 out of 20, and by the end of the primary cycle, more than two out of five pupils (42 percent) fail to meet the required standard for advancing to the first cycle of secondary school.

An analysis of PASEC results for 2008-2009 shows that teachers who received one or two years of initial pedagogic training or follow-up training in the teaching of French and mathematics are likely to get better results in the 2nd and 5th years of the primary cycle. Furthermore, teachers who have undergone training in addition to the skills-based approach seem to achieve the best results in the 5th year of primary school. Teacher absenteeism appears to have a negative impact on learning. Finally, based on the analysis, refresher courses in school management for school principals have a positive impact on learning outcomes for pupils in the second year of primary school.

A PASEC-type evaluation was conducted in 2017 with funding from the ongoing GPE project, and the results will be made available in the course of 2018. This exercise will be repeated in 2020, as part of the project for which this application is being submitted.

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1.2.2 Equity

There has been a marked increase in pupil numbers at all levels of the system and intake capacity is improving. At the pre-school level, pupil numbers grew by more than 10 percent on average between 2009 and 2015, mainly as a result of the Government’s commitment to a renewed thrust in Quranic education in public primary schools. This has led to a significant rise in the gross enrollment rate at the preprimary level, which grew from 7 percent to almost 32 percent over the period. However, this intake capacity level is markedly lower than the average of 60 percent observed in countries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) over recent years.\(^\text{10}\) Statistics also show that the system now has sufficient capacity to accommodate all school-age children at the primary school level.\(^\text{11}\)

In terms of attendance, data for 2016-2017 indicate that the gross enrollment rate for the primary level fell between 2014 and 2017, decreasing from 107.1 percent (105.1 percent for girls and 109.1 percent for boys) to 101.6 percent (100.1 percent for girls and 103.1 percent for boys). An analysis of data for 2016-2017 conducted by the national authorities, has pointed to teacher strikes as a possible cause for this drop in enrollment levels. The completion rate for the primary level also fell from 61.4 percent in 2014 to 59 percent in 2017.\(^\text{12}\)

There are observable disparities between the islands, with Grande-Comore appearing to be the most disadvantaged. This island has the largest number of schools (57 percent of all primary schools in the country), but gross enrollment rates (GER) and gross completion rates (GCR) are lower than in the other islands (GER of 90.2 percent in 2017 as against 109.5 percent in Anjouan and 119.5 percent in Moheli. The gross completion rate in 2017 was 42.3 percent, in contrast to 70.9 percent in Anjouan and 83 percent in Moheli).\(^\text{13}\)

The results of the 2008-2009 PASEC assessment test also reveal that pupils attending public schools and those from rural areas performed at a lower level. For example, at the end of the fifth year of schooling, fewer than 44 percent of pupils from urban areas scored higher than the minimum competency levels in French and mathematics in the PASEC test (40/100), while among their counterparts in the rural areas, fewer than 23 percent of pupils scored above the minimum competency threshold for mathematics and French.\(^\text{14}\)

Furthermore, 75 percent of public primary schools lack adequate and secure facilities and operate in conditions that are not generally conducive to learning, and especially not for children living with disabilities. The results of the 2003 survey on the situation of the disabled in the Comoros revealed that 60 percent of children with disabilities were not enrolled in school, as they are physically unable to gain access to them. It should be noted that the country is weak in the area of statistics and there is a paucity of data on the social inclusion of the disabled population.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{10}\) Transitional Education Sector Plan (TEP) 2017-2020
\(^{11}\) The Educational System of Comoros: A brief overview of its performance and operation, Ministry of National Education, Training and Research, 2017
\(^{12}\) Annual Report on the Progress of Implementation of the GPE Project in Comoros 2016-2017
\(^{13}\) Ibid
\(^{15}\) TEP 2017-2020
The available information points to the fact that disparities between boys and girls exist at the primary entry level: Based on 2014-2015 data, the rate of access of boys to primary school is 111 percent versus 93 percent for girls. This is equivalent to a score of 0.84 on the gender parity index (meaning that, for every ten boys enrolled in school, fewer than nine girls are enrolled). The gender disparity continues through to the transition from primary to lower secondary school, although the discrimination against girls appears to be limited to enrollment at the primary level: the rate of access of girls to the first year of lower secondary school is 70 percent as against 67 percent for boys. The advantage acquired by boys at the primary entry level disappears before the beginning of lower secondary school. With the transitional phase favoring the girls, they have a better chance of advancing to upper secondary school.16

Notwithstanding the notable progress made in terms of school access, there is still a relatively large segment of Comorian children who are outside of the education system. Around 22,000 children of primary school age are not enrolled in any educational institution. This represents 19 percent of the primary school age population, or one in five children.17

1.2.3 Efficiency

Between 2010 and 2015, retention rates across all education levels (from primary to the second cycle of secondary school) showed no real improvement: retention rates from entry to primary up to upper secondary school were below 40 percent (38 percent in 2010 and 39 percent in 2015). The retention rate for the primary level alone has remained stagnant at 74 percent in 2010 and 75 percent in 2015. The relatively high rate of repetition is one of the main reasons behind these numbers. In 2015, repetition rates registered, on average, 17 percent at the primary level, 14 percent at the lower secondary level and 17 percent at the upper secondary level, and were significantly below the rates recorded five years earlier, namely: 25 percent at the primary level, 18 percent at the lower secondary level and 21 percent at the upper secondary level.18 The internal efficiency coefficient indicated in the 2015-2016 GPE progress report was 0.64 in 2010, below the 0.7 threshold. This confirmed the relatively high rate of repetition and dropout. An analysis of the results of PASEC 2008-2009 reveals that retention rates are weak for public education institutions, particularly in Moheli where primary education is predominantly public.19

Based on the data collected for the GPE 2015-2016 progress report, the correlation index between the deployment of teachers and the number of pupils enrolled in primary school was 0.85 for Comoros, placing the country above the 0.80 threshold. In 2015, there were, on average, 31 pupils for each teacher at the primary level. At the secondary level, teachers were under-utilized, with ratios of 16 pupils to every teacher in public lower secondary schools and 14 students per teacher in public upper secondary schools, with an average of between 11 and 19 students per teacher for each autonomous island. Comorian students therefore enjoy highly favorable conditions for learning, since on the African continent on the whole, the ratio is roughly 40 pupils to one teacher at the primary level, 35 at

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17 TEP 2017-2020
the lower secondary level and 24 at the upper secondary level.\textsuperscript{20} With respect to teacher training, there appears to be no data on the number of trained teachers. However, the 2012 complete sector analysis (CSR) pointed to shortcomings in the initial and ongoing training of teachers, as well as in their monitoring and supervision.\textsuperscript{21}

1.2.4 Monitoring of Sector Performance

As is the case for other sectors in Comoros, the education sector is beset by the difficulties resulting from the incomplete process of decentralization begun in 2011. Persistent shortcomings may still be observed in the coordination, implementation and monitoring of national policies on education. These failures are attributable to the lack of clarity in defining and assigning the roles and responsibilities of each entity at the central level of the islands, as well as at the local level. The 2017-2020 transitional plan is intended to correct these deficiencies through various measures included in the program being proposed under this application.

There are weaknesses in terms of the monitoring of the education sector. The national conference organized each year with the participation of the President, did not take place in 2017. Moreover, while the development partners (DPs) are invited to participate in these conferences, they are not involved in their preparation. The joint sector reviews are intended to be used as a privileged tool for monitoring the education sector within the framework of the 2017-2020 TEP, and this application includes the cost of organizing an annual review in 2018 and 2020, as well as a mid-term review in 2019.

The LEG has been in place for several years and is co-chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and the coordinating agency (Embassy of France since June 2016). It meets each month and brings together representatives of the national authorities, from both central government and the islands, as well as the principal international and national partners (UNICEF, European Union, Maeecha (local NGO), AFD, World Bank, Teachers Union).

At the first stage of the quality review process, the Secretariat had noted that the monthly meetings of the group tended to focus on issues related to GPE grant activities, even though the group was also meant to serve as a platform for exchanging information, coordinating partner support, and monitoring the implementation of sector strategies. A LEG meeting of February 6, 2018 clarified the role of the group along the lines described in the Transitional Education Sector Plan (TEP) and reiterated in the current project. Going forward, the group is required to play a central role in monitoring the implementation of strategies and to participate fully in the organization of joint annual reviews. It was also decided in January 2018, following discussions led by the Secretariat, that the roles of the lead partner and the coordinating agencies, played separately up to that point by UNICEF and French Cooperation, respectively, should be merged. The French Cooperation agency now serves as both coordinating agency and lead partner.

\textsuperscript{20} The Educational System of the Comoros: a brief overview of its performance and operation, Ministry of National Education, Instruction and Research, 2017
\textsuperscript{21} TEP 2017-2020
2. Fixed Part Requirements

2.1 Requirement 1: A credible Education Sector Plan (ESP) or Transitional Education Plan (TEP) that has been endorsed.

The Government of the Union of Comoros has developed a Transitional Education Plan (TEP) for the years 2017/18 to 2019/20. The plan was validated by the Council of Ministers and endorsed by development partners, members of the LEG in October 2017. The partners endorsed the plan following the inclusion of several recommendations emanating from the independent assessment of the draft plan conducted in April 2017. Their endorsement served to confirm the plan’s credibility. The Secretariat’s assessment also confirmed the robust nature of the plan; notably, that it was evidence-based, appropriate to the context, took account of disparities, and was strategic, targeted and operational.

The TEP covers the entire sector. It proposes key strategies for developing the governance and management of the sector, as well as for improving system access and equity, quality and relevance. The plan has been developed on the basis of data from the CSR conducted in 2012, as well as from annual school data for the period 2013-2015 and from an institutional and performance analysis of the system conducted in 2016 with support from the Dakar Pole (UNESCO-IIPE). This analysis served to confirm the challenges identified in the CSR 2012. It is accompanied by a budgeted triennial action plan for the period 2018-2020 that was developed from a 2016-2026 simulation model and is aligned with a medium-term expenditure framework developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance. It is also accompanied by a 2018-2020 policy letter and a macrofinancial framework note.

In the letters endorsing the TEP, the development partners certify that: (1) they participated actively in the development of the education policy letter; (2) the TEP was developed on a participatory and inclusive basis; (3) there is coherence between the general policy guidelines, key strategies, activities and budget; (4) they are satisfied with the TEP implementation mechanisms and the proposed results framework; (5) the recommendations emanating from the ex-ante TEP assessment were taken into account; (6) they are convinced of the political will and commitment of the Government of the Comoros to support the education sector.

Conclusion: The Secretariat deems that Requirement 1 is met.

2.2 Requirement 2: Evidence of commitment to the ESP or TEP and its financing.

The fact that the TEP was tabled by a declaration signed by His Excellency the President of the Union of the Comoros attests to the Government’s commitment to support the implementation of the endorsed TEP and is a call to all stakeholders to join in this endeavor.

The Union of Comoros allocates a significant percentage of its national budget to the education sector. In a letter dated February 13, 2018, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education reiterated the Government’s commitment to meeting the two GPE conditions. The State dedicates between 24 and 27 percent of its budget to the education sector, at least 45 percent of which is earmarked for primary education.
Between 2014 and 2016, the level of recurrent public expenditure for the sector was in excess of 28 percent of total non-debt recurrent public expenditure (if debt servicing is included, the percentage of budgetary expenditure in the sector fell from 28 percent in 2014 to 25 percent in 2016). The Government intends to strengthen its commitment to the sector in the years ahead, with expected expenditure of 29 percent in 2017 and a little over 30 percent over the period 2018-2020 (with and without debt servicing).

With a primary completion rate of 59 percent in 2017, official recurrent expenditure on primary education (first six years of school, not including pre-primary) comprised only 33 percent of the overall 2016 education budget. Nevertheless, and as explained by the Ministry and the coordinating agency, this figure does not take account of the budgetary allocations for school operations and administration at the central level and in the islands, as such allocations are not disaggregated by education levels. It is therefore difficult to measure a significant part of the budget allocated for primary education, which means that the figure of 33 percent underestimates the real level of expenditure at the primary level. By rationalizing the deployment of secondary school teachers, the Government intends to increase its commitment to the sub-sector in the years ahead to 48.9 percent of recurrent education expenditure in 2017 and to 52.7 percent in 2020. The effect of this measure will be to re-distribute resources across the system as a whole and, notably, to increase resources earmarked for the primary sub-sector.

Around US$15 million in grant financing (notably EU, French Cooperation and UNICEF) is already underway or programmed. Other grants are being considered and have not been included. As a result, Annex 1 reflects funding of US$12.1 million for the duration of the TEP but excludes the GPE grant.

**Conclusion:** The Secretariat deems that Requirement 2 is met. Although the Comoros does not currently spend at least 45 percent of the recurring education budget on primary education, the country is committed to surpassing the 45 percent threshold during the program implementation period. The Secretariat recommends that the GPC request the CA/LEG to provide support to the Ministry in the design and implementation of a methodology for pinpointing education expenditure by sub-sector, and to report back on the share of the recurrent education budget allocated to primary education annually.

### 2.3 Requirement 3: Availability of data

The country conducted a CSR analysis in 2012 and intends to conduct another analysis during the period covered by the TEP (costs included in the three year action plan) to ensure the availability of empirical data to inform the development of the 2021-2030 ten-year plan. The most recent school data are from 2016-2017. A quick analysis of system performance and governance was conducted in 2016.

The TEP outlines measures for improving the EMIS. School statistics are available for the years 2016/2017. The country was therefore able to provide data to the UIS for 2013 and 2014 and to cover eight of the 12 key indicators identified in the GPE results framework. The data collected are disaggregated by gender and setting and cover all levels of the system. The TEP placed considerable emphasis on measures to improve system management, particularly on the development of capacity to collect, process and analyze school data, building on the improvements made in previous years under the current GPE grant-funded project and with the support thereafter of the European Union.
Owing to the fragility of the system, the country does not have a robust setup for monitoring learning outcomes. Nevertheless, as a follow-up to the last PASEC assessment conducted in 2009, a PASEC-type assessment of learning outcomes for the 2nd and 5th years of primary school was conducted on the basis of a data sample, under the framework of the current GPE grant. This grant included provisions for the development of national capacities to organize assessments and analyze their results. Another PASEC-type assessment is to be carried out in 2020, with funding to be provided as a part of the current application.

**Conclusion:** The Secretariat deems that requirement 3 is met.

### 3. ESPIG

#### 3.1 PAST ESPIG PERFORMANCE

The Union of Comoros became a GPE member in 2013, following the endorsement of its Interim Education Plan (IEP) that was designed to cover an initial three-year period from 2013 to 2015. As a result of the delays in implementing the IEP and in the development of the new plan, the IEP was extended to cover the year 2015/2016, while the 2016/2017 period was covered by the Government’s plan of action. The country was the recipient of a first ESPIG grant in the amount of US$4.6 million to support IEP implementation. The ESPIG-funded project was implemented with UNICEF acting as grant agent. Funding was approved in May 2013 and was slated initially to end in September 2016. The Secretariat approved a first extension to August 2017 and a restructuring of the project in September and November 2016, respectively. As a result of continued delays in implementation, a second project extension to June 30, 2018 was approved by the Secretariat in August 2017. On the same date, the Secretariat also approved adjustments to the results framework.

The current project is made up of two main components. The first aims to enhance access and improve the retention rate and quality of primary education through measures to rehabilitate infrastructure, improve access for children with disabilities, train teachers, provide textbooks and teaching guides, assess learning outcomes, and develop pedagogical support and supervision. The second component aims to strengthen sector management by supporting the development of the EMIS, program budgeting and IEP monitoring and evaluation.

The Project’s rate of disbursement to date is around 95 percent, and total disbursement is expected by the end of the grant allocation on June 30, 2018. The lessons learned from IEP implementation, as well as from the GPE program underway and other development partners (DPs), have been taken into account in this proposed project, and include: (1) the leadership of the Ministry of Education is crucial; (2) Intra- and Inter-sectoral coordination has facilitated the implementation of many activities; (3) the consultation framework between the Ministry, the Commissions of the islands (CEIA) and the partners is an indispensable tool for providing leadership to the education system; (4) the project approach requires sound coordination of DPs interventions; (5) the promotion of stability and the retention of the responsible officers and qualified staff in the Ministry of Education and the CEIA are essential; (6) the implementation of systems to collect and process data should be accompanied by initiatives to promote training; (7) the importance of using locally-sourced skills in the process.\(^{22}\)

\(^{22}\) Program document submitted for this application (Transitional Education Plan for the Union of Comoros).
3.2 ESPIG Description

The Transitional Education Project for the Union of the Comoros (PTEUC) is subsumed within the Transitional Education Plan (TEP) for the period 2017-2020, whose aim is to lay the basis for the management of the education sector. The project combines country-wide interventions with innovative initiatives that have been tested on a sample of institutions (50 public primary schools located on the three islands and representing 15 percent of the total number of primary schools in the country), or in a geographic area (Moheli). Following consultations between the Government and all partners, it was decided that the project would focus on the primary education level in keeping with the current and future support initiatives of the DPs. The project consists of the following components:

**Component I. Governance and Oversight.** In order to ensure that the minimum conditions for capacity for the future are in place and to guarantee the long-term implementation of an education plan that takes account of the lessons learned at the central level, the project provides for the following:

(a) Capacity development in the area of governance on an experimental basis at the grassroots level across 50 project schools (targeting public schools only) that focus on 50 school councils (CEs in French), 50 school principals, the CIPRs and the Commissions. The outcomes expected from the targeted schools include an increase of 15 points in the average scores for French and mathematics achievement tests, a jump of 6 points in retention rates, and a reduction of 5 points in the repetition rate.

(b) Improvements in the use of school data at the national level through the provision of support for producing statistical yearbooks; and the development of a common culture in the area of oversight, by training actors at the grassroots level involved in the 50 pilot schools to use available statistical data to inform their decisions.

(c) Improvement of accounting management in the four financial affairs departments (of the Ministry and the three Commissions of the islands), and the development of oversight and monitoring of the TEP (organization of annual sector reviews) and of the GPE program (establishment of four focal points in the national administration offices). Organization of a PASEC-type assessment in 2020, as a follow-up to that conducted in 2017 under the GPE program and also included here.

**Component II. Quality.** With a view to quality improvement, the project provides for the following:

(a) Actions to provide pedagogical support to all 4,300 public and private school teachers across the island to complement the assistance already in place or programmed by other partners. The actions to be implemented under the project will include continuing training of teachers in early learning and learning assessment, the conduct of learning assessment and the supply of teacher kits.

(b) The distribution of French and mathematics textbooks and teacher guides for four of the six grades of primary, to ensure that every child has a textbook in the basic disciplines of the revised curriculum.
Component III. Equity. The aim is to stimulate demand and promote inclusive education, through:

(a) The development of equity and gender equality by focusing on the standardization of the school entry age for girls and boys, and by improving retention rates in Moheli on the basis of the successful experience in the Nyumakele region of Anjouan. The expected outcomes for the island are a reduction in rates of absenteeism of girls and improvement of their rates of retention.

(b) Strengthening inclusion by taking account on an experimental basis of the needs of children with disabilities, through measures to adapt classroom facilities, provide devices for the hearing and vision impaired, and train teachers in sign language. The aim here is to ensure that, at the end of the project, the attendance rate of children with disabilities is the same as that of other pupils.

Component IV. Project Management. Grant Agent support relates mainly to the management costs that constitute, for the most part, the costs incurred by UNICEF-Comoros and whose coverage includes human resources, logistics, operational support and a contribution towards audit expenses.

In view of the innovative actions and complexity of the project for a country such as the Comoros, UNICEF has provided for the recruitment of an international expert at the P3 level to manage the project. It should be noted that two thirds of the cost of this component IV are earmarked for financing this post and will be co-financed by UNICEF (one third of the cost of the post will be covered by GPE funding; the remainder is covered from UNICEF’s own budget).

In view of the continued fragility of the country and of its national capacity, the national authorities and the LEG have agreed to continue using the project implementation arrangement being applied in the current GPE-funded project. The project’s alignment with national systems is discussed in the following section.

The total for this sub-component as a percentage of the overall budget (13.7 percent of budget) is relatively high, although this may be explained by the relatively low total allocation (it is difficult to cut back certain costs). For this reason, the Secretariat considers the project management costs to be reasonable.
Table A: ESPIG Components and costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>GPE Financing US$</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MCA</strong></td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Component 1: Governance and oversight</strong></td>
<td>1,024,886</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 1</strong></td>
<td>739,715</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 2</strong></td>
<td>127,664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 3</strong></td>
<td>157,507</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B Component 2: Quality</strong></td>
<td>526,921</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 1</strong></td>
<td>329,640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 2</strong></td>
<td>197,281</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C Component 3: Equity</strong></td>
<td>435,155</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 1</strong></td>
<td>249,205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-component 2</strong></td>
<td>185,950</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D Component 4: Project management</strong></td>
<td>313,038</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Grant Agent’s Implementation Support Costs*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong> (with Grant Agent’s Implementation Support Costs)</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency fees</strong> **</td>
<td>184,000</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Include Grant Agent’s direct costs, such as Program Management, Administrative and other direct implementation costs.

** Agency Fee is not included in the MCA and is calculated as percentage rate (agreed with each GA) from the Total Fixed Part and Total Variable Part.

3.2 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM DOCUMENT

The program development process was led by the national authorities, in close collaboration with the grant agent, and was drafted to take account of the quality review process conducted by the Secretariat. The finished program takes account of the observations of the Secretariat in the QAR 1 and QAR 2, notably the recommendation to limit the number of activities or the scope of the interventions on account of the relatively limited available financing.

Following the final stage of examination of the report (QAR 3), the Secretariat considers that all quality standards relevant to the assessment of the program document have been met (see annex 2). The attention of the Grants and Performance Committee is invited to the following points:

- **Program Design**
The objective of the program is to resolve the problems observed and identified in the transitional education sector plan for the Comoros. The implementation choices are appropriate in the fragile
context of the Comoros, notably the use of pilots and other actions to ensure that the necessary foundation for the implementation of the subsequent sector plan are in place. The program is accompanied by a logical results chain and is based on criteria linking interventions, outcomes and implementation. The program components have been designed to ensure that the outcomes of each intervention are mutually reinforcing. The specific goals and objectives of the GPE are appropriately taken into account and the program structure reflects the components of the transitional sector plan that deal with the development of governance and oversight, quality and relevance, and access and equity.

Nevertheless, in relation to sub-component 3.2 – improvement of inclusive education, the Secretariat notes that the activities proposed under the program framework, while necessary and completely justified, are relatively limited in scope. These activities concern the application of the national strategy adopted in 2017 for improving access for children living with disabilities. Against this background, the Government and its partners should be encouraged to mobilize the technical and financial resources required for implementing the complementary measures provided for in the national strategy on access and participation of the most vulnerable not-yet-enrolled children, regardless of the nature of the special need they manifest.

- **Program Budget**
The program cost is justified. It should be noted that over 10 percent of the total allocation will be used for purchasing and distributing textbooks, guides, and school and sanitary kits. The central purchasing office of UNICEF will be used for the purpose, thereby ensuring credible unit costs. Furthermore, in order to ensure that the program is properly coordinated, UNICEF will also co-finance a significant percentage of the personnel costs.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**
The program includes a monitoring and evaluation framework, with strategies and methods designed to ensure accountability. A mechanism for monitoring/evaluation has, therefore, been put in place for each component, and is overseen by a steering committee whose mission is to ensure the development, monitoring and implementation of the transitional sector plan, thereby looking beyond the current program. The members of the steering committee are the Secretary General and the cabinet director of the Ministry of Education, and the coordinators (from ministry departments) of the three technical groups responsible for the development of the plan (governance, quality, access). The steering committee will work in consultation with the Commissions responsible for education in the autonomous islands (CIEA) as well as with the Local Education Group.

The results framework is robust and covers the majority of the interventions. Nevertheless, some targets have not yet been computed. The aim is to establish the relevant targets once the reference data are available. These data sets relate for the most part to indicators linked to the pilot projects, the benchmarks for which will be known once the first independent assessment is conducted by an international consultant. Nevertheless, the results framework lists the changes anticipated in relation to the baseline values for these indicators and does so either in absolute terms or as a percentage.

- **Fiduciary, Implementation Arrangements and Readiness**
The implementation arrangements are appropriate. The different levels of responsibility at the central and local levels have been defined, and the grant agent is responsible for the physical supervision
and financial management of the activities. The activities will be carried out in accordance with UNICEF rules and procedures.

The program is also ready for implementation, and work is already underway to identify the pilot schools.

- **Risk Identification and Mitigation Measures**
  The risks matrix of the program is appropriate. Notably, the matrix lists the fiduciary risks and the mitigation strategies to be implemented by UNICEF.

The previous GPE grant program, which ends on June 30, 2018, has suffered from a number of implementation delays, but the Secretariat is confident that the program presented here can be completed in the proposed three-year timeframe, particularly as it is half the size of the previous grant (US$2.3 million versus US$4.6 million).

- **Sustainability**
  The program is designed to be sustainable. One of the main objectives of the program is to strengthen the capacity of the system to develop and operate a subsequent sector plan. Capacity development activities are included under all components.

- **Aid Effectiveness**
  The Secretariat considers that the program satisfies our principal criteria on aid effectiveness, as it is aligned with the TEP and the modality is well justified and appropriate to the fragile context of the country. The project modality employed, which uses UNICEF rules and procedures, particularly for procurement and accounting, is deemed appropriate in view of the fragility of the system and the limited technical capacity at the central and local levels for fiduciary management. Component 1 of the program includes activities to develop capacity for the management of human and financial resources and to promote better alignment with national systems in the future.

It should also be recalled that a mechanism for managing and monitoring the sector is already in place as a result of the work on the transitional plan and is designed to ensure that the interventions supported by the development partners are properly coordinated. The fact that the program is incorporating this national piloting mechanism underscores its value as a tool of implementation and is a model for the other partners. Information on project execution will be included in the annual TEP progress reports, as well as in the mid-term and final TEP assessment reports that are targeted for assistance under the program.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the 2017-2020 transitional plan provides for the establishment of a pooled fund by 2020 that will be endowed by sector partners desirous of making a contribution as well as by the Government, and will, notably, be used for financing school budgets and for monitoring, support and supervision activities.23

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23 2017-2020 Transitional Education Sector Plan (TEP)
4. VARIABLE PART

Not applicable. On December 22, 2017, the Grants and Performance Committee approved the ex-ante approach for the implementation of the ESPIG for the Comoros.

The decision was based, notably, on the fact that the transitional plan includes strategies to enhance equity (to increase education access for children with disabilities and children from vulnerable households); efficiency (through the implementation of school management standards and a policy of automatic promotion through the various school cycles, by extending the practice of multi-grade teaching, etc.); and learning outcomes (through the distribution of free textbooks, the harmonization of marking methods, monitoring of pupil performance and the implementation of corrective measures in each school, etc.). The implementation of these measures will be evaluated, and the execution of a complete sector analysis (CSR) in 2019 will facilitate the development of relevant and effective strategies in the three key dimensions (equity, efficiency, learning outcomes) within the framework of the next sector plan.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretariat recommends that the Grants and Performance Committee conclude that the three requirements of the grant model are met.

The Secretariat considers that the proposed program is both relevant to the national context and well aligned with the national sector plan. The Secretariat will engage in regular dialogue with the country partners and will monitor those aspects that require particular attention, such as the consolidation of the TEP steering mechanisms, the coherent organization of national conferences and joint sector reviews, and the future establishment of an education pooled fund, as provided for in the transitional plan.

The Secretariat proposes, finally, that the committee consider the following recommendations:

- The Secretariat recommends that the GPC request the coordinating agency and the development partners to support the ministry in the design and implementation of a methodology for disaggregating education expenditure by sub-sector; and that the GPC requests the LEG to report annually on the share of the recurrent budget for education allocated to primary education.

- The Secretariat recommends that the GPC encourage the Government and its partners to mobilize the technical and financial resources required for implementing additional measures to those proposed within the framework of the current program so as to enhance the availability of inclusive education and facilitate access and participation of the most vulnerable children, regardless of the kind of special need that they manifest; and that the GPC request the LEG to report back annually on the activities implemented and outcomes noted in the area of inclusive education throughout the country.

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24 These recommendations were adjusted by the GPC. The final recommendations are found in Board Document BOD/2018/04 DOC 05 Annex 1.
#### Component 1 of transitional plan (2018-2020): Governance (US$ 2.9 million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor name</th>
<th>Financial scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFD</td>
<td>US$ 779,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>US$ 1,370,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Cooperation Agency</td>
<td>US$ 668,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>US$ 150,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Component 2 of the transitional plan (2018-2020): Quality (US$ 4.6 million)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Donor name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFD</td>
<td>US$ 1,113,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>French Cooperation Agency</td>
<td>US$ 1,025,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIF/IFADEM</td>
<td>US$ 1,666,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>US$ 800,000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor name</th>
<th>Financial scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Fund</td>
<td>US$ 2,815,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>US$ 1,850,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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25 Reference Table 1. Contribution of TFPs to the TEP, Program document, pages 13-14.