June 5, 2020

Hon. Mthuli Ncube  
Minister of Finance and Economic Development  
Ministry of Finance and Economic Development  
Harare  
Republic of Zimbabwe

Hon. Amb. Cain Mathema  
Minister of Primary and Secondary Education  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Harare  
Republic of Zimbabwe

Approval of COVID-19 Accelerated Funding to Support Zimbabwe’s Education Sector

Hon. Ncube, Hon. Amb. Mathema,

On behalf of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), I am pleased to inform you that with the delegated authority from the GPE Board of Directors, I have approved [Country’s] application for a COVID-19 accelerated funding request in the amount of US$ 7,000,000. I have also approved a 7% agency fee for the grant agent, UNICEF, in the amount of US$ 490,000.

The grant has a start date of June 5, 2020 and an end date of November 30, 2021. The full decision language of this approval can be found in the annex to this letter.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Lucinda Ramos, Country Lead for Zimbabwe.

We look forward to working with you closely to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of Zimbabwe’s children.
Sincerely,

Alice P. Albright
Chief Executive Officer
Global Partnership for Education

cc:
Members of Local Education Group (LEG)
Mrs. Tumisang Thabela, Permanent Secretary and DCP FP, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Ms. Tanya Zebroff, Coordinating Agency Representative, DFID
Ms. Niki Abrishamian, Chief Education, UNICEF
Ms. Ameena Mohamed Didi, Chief of Education, UNICEF
Ms. Saadhna Panday, Education Specialist, Global Education Partnerships Lead, UNICEF
Ms. Poonam Buttan, Public Partnerships Officer, UNICEF
Ms. Reiko Okumura, Public Partnerships Specialist, UNICEF
Mr. Sven Baeten, Acting Country Support Team Manager, GPE Secretariat
Ms. Lucinda Ramos, Country Lead and Senior Education Specialist, GPE Secretariat
Annex – DECISION LANGUAGE

In line with the delegated authority granted by the Board of Directors, the GPE CEO approves the COVID-19 accelerated funding request for Zimbabwe in the amount of US$ 7,000,000 plus an additional US$ 490,000 in agency fees to UNICEF as Grant Agent. The grant has a start date of June 5, 2020, and an end date of November 30, 2021.

The GPE CEO recognizes with appreciation the leadership and commitment of the Government of Zimbabwe in preparing a response plan and grant proposal that will mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector as well as support the recovery of the education system from the crisis.

The GPE Board approved the COVID-19 funding mechanism on a first come, first served approach for the first US$ 125 million of the original US$ 225 million COVID-19 country funding window. Although the remaining US$ 100 million has been subsequently significantly increased to US$ 350 million by the Board, the demand for the COVID-19 funding mechanism still exceeds the available funds and the maximum allocation for Zimbabwe is now US$ 7,000,000, lower than the initial allocation and requested amount of US$ 10,000,000.

Unless otherwise indicated by the decision language request for Report-Back, and keeping within the original budget of each component, the government and grant agent have full authority to prioritize within the approved activities of the original application, after consultation with the local education group.

Recognizing the GPE Board’s intent to proceed with the COVID-19 funding on a timeline which acknowledges the COVID-19 emergency, the Government and Grant Agent are asked to move forward with implementation immediately while addressing the following points and reporting back to the Secretariat by June 29, 2020:

Request for Report-Back

1. The Grant Agent is requested to provide a revised program document (including results framework and budget), to be sent after grant approval, following consultation with the LEG and agreement by the Government on the changes including the prioritization.

The Secretariat also raises the following points of observation, which are suggestions rather than requirements:

Observations

a) Given the urgency of the crisis, grant implementation to commence on schedule and the Grant Agent to submit a cash transfer request within two weeks of approval to facilitate the timely release of funds in support of program implementation.
b) Activities with clear and immediate impact on the continuation and safeguarding of education for vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 crisis be prioritized over activities that provide lesser immediate value for money for this purpose.

c) An appropriate reduction in implementation support costs given the lower overall budget.

d) To ensure public access to the government response plan, the Secretariat recommends that MoPSE post the plan on its website.

e) The Secretariat positively notes the synergy of the program with activities and financing of other partners, including the integration of activities financed through the GPE Global Grant to support COVID-19 Response (WASH, materials provision to disadvantaged learners, radio learning).

f) The Secretariat notes that school feeding for vulnerable children is included in the COVID-19 Response Plan and emphasizes that this is a critical aspect of support to ensure the most vulnerable children will be able to return to school. Since school feeding is not among the activities proposed for GPE funding (it is an option under the SIGs), the Secretariat encourages further dialogue among partners to ensure school feeding is prioritized, including in the most vulnerable areas, through other sources of funding.

g) As country partners finalize the ‘essential package’ for learners and teachers [activity 2.2.1] and the focus of the SIG [activity 2.2.2], the Secretariat recommends that due consideration be given to demand-side constraints to learners return to and participation in school.

**Reporting**

Please note that during the implementation period, the GPE Secretariat will require the Grant Agent to fill out a quarterly survey which will request core data on program implementation. At the end of the implementation period, the Grant Agent is expected to submit a completion report to the GPE Secretariat. Detailed information on the reporting requirement is available in the Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding on GPE website.

**Reprogramming**

The Government and the Grant Agent may reprogram this grant, in consultation with the Local Education Group and where active the Education cluster, for an amount not to exceed 25% of the allocation without prior Secretariat approval but must disclose such cases to the Secretariat. For an amount of 25% or more, as well as for any extension, advance approval from the Secretariat must be sought. The process for advanced approval will be that of non-minor revisions of ESPIG which can be found here: https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/policy-education-sector-program-implementation-grants