June 24, 2020

Hon. Mr. Samuel D. Tweah
Minister of Finance & Development Planning
Ministry of Finance
Republic of Liberia

H.E. Prof. Ansu D. Sonii
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
Republic of Liberia

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

Honorable Minister, Excellency,

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 Liberia’s application for a COVID-19 accelerated funding request in the amount of US$ 7 million. I have also approved 7% agency fees for the grant agent, UNICEF, in the amount of US$ 490,000.

The grant has a start date of June 24, 2020 and an end date of December 31, 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 Mr. Morten Sigsgaard, Country Lead for Liberia.

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

Alice P. Albright
Chief Executive Officer
Global Partnership for Education

cc:
Members of Local Education Group (LEG)
Mr. Alton V. Kesselly, Deputy Minister for Planning Research and Development, Ministry of Education
Mr. Dominic Dormenla Nanda Kweme, Assistant Minister for Planning Research and Development, Ministry of Education
Mr. Joe Gbasakollie, DCP Focal Point for GPE
Ms. Rasheena Harris-Reid, Director – Education Office, USAID
Mr. Aliou Tall, Acting Director – Education Office, USAID
Mr. Bernard Batidzirai, 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
Mr. Morten Sigsgaard, Country Lead for the Republic of Liberia, 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 Liberia 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 24, 2020, and an end date of December 31, 2021.

The GPE CEO recognized with appreciation the leadership and commitment of the Government of Liberia in preparing a national 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 Liberia is now US$ 7 million, lower than the initial allocation and requested amount of US$ 10 million.

 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 July 15, 2020:

Request for Report-Back

1. The Grant Agent is requested to provide a revised program document (including results framework, budget and implementation plan), following consultation with the LEG and agreement by the Government. This revised program document needs to prioritize activities so as to keep within the new grant allocation and must address the requirements noted below. Upon receipt of the revised program document, the Secretariat will verify compliance with each of the requirements below, but there will be no additional grant approval issued, nor further reassessment of the program.

   i. 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.
ii. Remove from the list of beneficiaries any for-profit providers of core educational services (e.g., for-profit private schools) for activities 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 (PTA training) to ensure compliance with GPE policy on private sector engagement.

iii. Provide a clear description of the approach to the accelerated, catch-up, and remedial learning program, including, if relevant, children targeted, expected duration of the intervention, and implementation arrangements and quality assurance.

iv. Include the GPE core indicators in the results framework presented in Annex IV, and report the baseline, target, data sources and disaggregation, wherever applicable.

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

Observations
a) Given the urgency of the crisis, grant implementation is to commence on schedule and the Grant Agent is to submit a cash transfer request within two weeks of approval to facilitate the timely release of funds in support of program implementation.

b) An appropriate reduction in implementation support costs should be considered, given the lower overall budget.

c) In the context of this program and the broader sector response, further consideration should be given to how activities can integrate support to children with disabilities and special learning needs.

d) The proposal indicates provision of 125 WASH facilities in schools with no facilities/limited facilities. Given the high need for WASH facilities across the country, country partners are encouraged to further specify criteria to be used to decide which schools benefit from these investments.

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, advanced 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