



# Solomon Islands

Application to Global Partnership for Education COVID-19  
Accelerated Funding Window for Emergency Response

**August 2020**





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# COVER NOTE

OVERVIEW	
Country:	Solomon Islands
Grant agent(s):	UNICEF
Coordinating agency(ies):	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)
Program name:	Solomon Islands COVID-19 Education Sector Preparedness and Response
COVID-19 Accelerated Funding amount requested:	USD 750,000
Agency fees amount (additional to COVID-19 Accelerated Funding amount requested): <sup>1</sup>	USD 52,500
Agency fees as % of total COVID-19 Accelerated Funding requested:	7%
COVID-19 Accelerated Funding application date:	9/30/2020
Estimated COVID-19 Accelerated Funding program start date:	11/1/2020
Estimated COVID-19 Accelerated Funding program closing date (must be last day of the month, e.g. June <b>30</b> , 2021):	4/30/2022
Expected submission date of completion report (At the latest 6 months after program closing date):	10/31/2022

Grant modality - (please enter 'X')	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sector Pooled
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Project Pooled/ Co-financed
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Project/ Stand-alone

<sup>1</sup> General agency fees are additional to the Accelerated Funding amount requested, and determined by the grant agent's own internal regulations. They are paid to the agency's headquarters and relate to overhead costs and are typically used to assist in the defrayment of administrative and other costs incurred in connection with the management and administration of grant funds. These fees are pre-determined in the Financial Procedure Agreement (FPA) between the grant agent and the GPE Trustee.

# INTRODUCTION

The State of Public Emergency (SOE) was declared in Solomon Islands by His Excellency, the Governor General Sir David Vunagi, on 25 March 2020. This has allowed the National Government to put in place measures, orders and regulations to fight against the coronavirus entering the country. On 27 March 2020, the Prime Minister, in his address to the nation and people, declared four emergency provinces across the country. In response to the SOE, the Government of Solomon Islands had established the Joint Oversight Committee (OSC) under the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to provide strategic direction on a whole-of-government planning and response to COVID-19.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) advised all schools in the Solomon Islands to close on 30 March 2020, following the declaration of the SOE and advice from the Joint Oversight Committee. However, based on careful consideration from the Joint Oversight Committee and the Solomon Islands Government's on preparedness and response plans to combat the threat of coronavirus, MEHRD advised schools in the non-emergency zones<sup>2</sup> in the Provinces to resume form 3, 5, and 6 classes on Monday 27 April, 2020. The schools were advised to re-open based on the potential risks from high to low areas in the Solomon Islands. The schools in the low risk areas were advised to reopen first. All schools throughout the Solomon Islands have since resumed classes starting from 25th May 2020.

Although Solomon Islands is yet to record a single case of the COVID-19, the risks associated with re-opening the borders cannot be ignored. Given the rapidly evolving situation of the coronavirus pandemic and the uncertainty it caused, MEHRD reviewed its initial COVID-19 preparedness and response plan developed in March. The current Education System Response Scenario Plan (ESRSCP)<sup>3</sup> aims to respond to the evolving situation of the coronavirus threat to the nation and to respond to the disruptions it has caused to the education sector. This plan responds to the education system needs in particular, and aims to address the immediate challenges that COVID-19 represents to students, teachers, staff and communities affected by the school closure, reopening and health related measures.

The ESRSCP was developed as a rolling plan for the reallocation of education resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the ESRSCP does not alter or change the education goals set out in the Education Strategic Framework 2016-2030, but reinforces the areas that need immediate attention, such as public health and safety, teaching and learning continuity and preparedness, resilience, adaptation and wellbeing, as well as community engagement and support in response to COVID-19. The plan focuses on elements of COVID-19 preparation which

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<sup>2</sup> Emergency zones are Honiara, Guadalcanal, Munda, Gizo, Taro and Schortlands

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.mehrd.gov.sb/images/COVID19/MEHRD\\_COVID-19\\_Education\\_System\\_Response\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.mehrd.gov.sb/images/COVID19/MEHRD_COVID-19_Education_System_Response_Plan.pdf)

facilitate strong distance education, ensuring continuity of learning for pupils living in remote areas and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

# COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Solomon Islands comprises over 900 islands situated to the south of Papua New Guinea and North of Vanuatu in the western South Pacific. The islands are home to 652,857 people (UNDESA, 2019 estimate). The islands are organized into 10 administrative areas consisting of 9 provinces and the Capital Territory of Honiara. With a total landmass of 28,400 square kilometres, the Solomon Islands is situated in a provisional exclusive economic zone of 1.5 million square kilometres and straddles 1500km between its most western and eastern island.

The Human Development Index (HDI) blends health, education and poverty measures to rate human development. The UNDP 2018 HDI Statistical Update<sup>4</sup> gives the Solomon Islands' Human Development Index value as 0.546 and rank 151 (out of 189 countries). This is equal with neighboring Papua New Guinea and between Cameroon and Tanzania. Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is estimated at USD 1,872. The Solomon Islands undertook a full census in November 2019 and will prepare a Voluntary National Report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in 2020.

## UNDP HDI Statistical Update (2018)

Life Expectancy at Birth: 71.0

Expected Years of Schooling: 10.2

Mean Years of Schooling: 5.5

HDI Index: 0.546

Ranking: 151 (from 189)

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) is currently finalizing the Education Bill which aims at transforming education system in Solomon Islands relating to ECE, including pre-primary year (PPY), primary and junior and senior secondary education. To avoid confusion, the PPY year is considered part the Early Childhood Sector however, as the Bill looks to make this compulsory it will also form part of Basic Education and so may be co-domiciled between an ECE Centre or a Primary School. Secondary education may be provided through community, provincial or national high schools. School authorities include government, church and private governance. Recent legislation through the enactment of the Solomon Islands Tertiary Education and Skills Authority Bill has changed the governance structure of all post - secondary education including Rural Training Centres, TVET and higher education.

As of 2018, the sector is comprised of 503 standalone primary schools (years one-six, of which 131 are non-government), 239 community high schools (most of which also include a primary section), 16 provincial high schools (2 non-government) and 10 national high schools (8 non-government). 268 registered ECE centres offer early childhood education along with several community and church based centres offering more informal programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>4</sup> Retrieved from [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018\\_human\\_development\\_statistical\\_update.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf), 31st January 2020

Enrolment data masks some inequities. GER for primary in 2018 was 118% (117.4F, 118.3M) with NER for the same reported as 91.8 (91.8F,91.7M). However provincially, GER ranged from 99.5- 137.4% and NER from 78.2 – 104. Significant difference exists between GER and NER at ECCE (92.5 (95.2F, 89.9M), 39.4 (41.2F, 37.8M)) and junior secondary (73.5 (73.7F, 73.3M), 37.2 (39.1F, 35.4M)) which could be worthy of further investigation. Issues of late enrolment and repetition in early grades have particular impact on these indicators. Repetition rates are greater than 7% in the first three years of primary education. After Year 1, the survival rate drops below 80% for the remainder of the primary cycle and below 50% across junior and senior secondary.<sup>5</sup>

The 2017 Solomon Islands Standardised Test for Achievement (SISTA) results report Grade 6 overall literacy at 68.9% of students at or above expected level and 71% for numeracy. This national result also masks considerable difference across province and between school types with students in urban centres significantly out performing rural and isolated students and primary students in community high schools outperforming with counterparts in standalone primary. Little difference is seen in numeracy results according to gender however, girls perform significantly better than boys across all strands of literacy (reading, language and writing).<sup>6</sup>

The Solomon Islands has participated in three rounds (2012, 2015 and 2018) of the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) delivered through the Education and Quality Programme of the Pacific Community (SPC). There are pleasing trends of improvement in both literacy and numeracy and students in the Solomon Islands perform well when compared to the region. The sustainability of improved results will need to be supported by attention to curriculum development and resourcing and teacher in service professional development.

*Table 1 - Comparative results of PILNA Assessment*

% at or above expected proficiency level						
	Year 4			Year 6		
	2015	2018	Regional (2018)	2015	2018	Regional (2018)
<b>Numeracy</b>	97	97	83	93	96	83
<b>Literacy</b>	50	54	53	66	70	63

<sup>5</sup> Performance Assessment Report (2018), MEHRD, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Performance Assessment Report (2018), MEHRD, 2018

The domestic appropriation for vote Education has averaged 33-34% of total government spend over recent years.<sup>7</sup> This represents 13% of nominal GDP.<sup>8</sup> The education sector budget consists of separate lines for recurrent, capital and development (donor). A high percentage of recurrent expenditure, averaging 59.75% between 2017-2020, is attributed to the tertiary sector (excluding TVET), with primary and secondary expending between 14% and 19% of budget each.

There are several teacher-training schools and a technical institute, as well as a campus of the University of the South Pacific in Honiara and the Solomon Islands National University (SINU). Additionally, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education offers teacher-training, finance, nursing and secretarial studies, and a range of technical subjects related to Solomon Islands' economy such as marine and fisheries studies, forestry and agriculture. The college also gives some first-year university courses (Commonwealth of Nations, 2020).

As of 2014, there was an acute shortage of qualified teachers in Solomon Islands, as well as weak school administration and ineffective community engagement. Rural areas were particularly affected by this shortage, as well as a growing number of secondary schools (UNICEF, 2014). Additionally, teacher absenteeism continues to be a challenging issue, particularly in the more remote and rural areas (MEHRD, 2017a).

The Solomon Islands Education Strategic Framework 2016-30 (MEHRD, 2016a) defines the vision, goals and the strategies for the education sector in the Solomon Islands. The Framework provides an outline of the phased implementation of the strategy through three rolling five-year National Education Action Plans (NEAPs) and encapsulated the goals on improving quality, increasing access and improve management and better use of education resources. The first NEAP (MEHRD, 2016b) covered the period 2016-2020 which will lapse this year. The next NEAP 2021-2025 is to be developed based on lessons learned over the last 5 years and future priorities identified in the ESF. The work on the new NEAP has commenced and is supported by MFAT, DFAT, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education through a harmonised model.

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Finance and Treasury Budget Papers, 2017-19

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Finance and Treasury 2017

# MEHRD COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PLAN

The closure of schools and institutions in response to COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented risk to children's education, protection, and wellbeing (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank & WFP, 2020). Areas that need immediate attention in the education sector include teaching and learning continuity and preparedness, remote and continuous learning, engagement and support to key stakeholders, as well as student assessment and grading. A detailed plan is in place to provide the implementation direction to ensure the education system scales up quickly in the re-opening of schools, enrolment of students, and provision of remedial measures. In the longer term, there is a need to be clear on how the environment for education could evolve in our progress towards the achievement of the Government priorities, Education Strategic Framework 2016-2030 (MEHRD, 2016a), National Education Plans and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 with its related targets.

The Education System Response Scenario Plan (ESRSCP) was developed as a rolling plan for the reallocation of education resources during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>9</sup>. The ESRSCP does not alter or change the education goals set out in the Education Strategic Framework 2016-30 (MEHRD, 2016a), but reinforces the areas that need immediate attention, such as public health and safety, teaching and learning continuity and preparedness, resilience, adaptation and wellbeing, as well as community engagement and support in response to COVID-19.

The Ministry developed four (4) scenarios that can be used for (a) schools reopening (b) schools closing, (c) education system recovery, and (d) adaptive opening and closing of schools.

## Rationale that underpins scenarios

The following premises guide the planning for these different scenarios:

- ◆ Solomon Islands is COVID-19 free as of ESRSCP endorsement.
- ◆ Globally, most countries are being significantly affected by the outbreak of this virus.
- ◆ Many countries with whom the Solomon Islands maintains close relationships have COVID-19 patients among their populations; in some cases, the infected include some Solomon Islands nationals resident abroad.
- ◆ Until effective vaccines or treatment become widespread, community transmission of the virus is likely to occur in many countries during 2020. The virus could remain a health challenges across the world into 2021 and 2022.

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<sup>9</sup> This plan was developed in consultation with, and under guidance from, the EDPCG; the EDPCG has also approved the ESRSCP

- ◆ Unless Solomon Islands maintains closed borders with other countries, it is likely that COVID-19 will emerge here at some time.
- ◆ Education will be disrupted and students' health will be at risk when an outbreak occurs. It is essential that a range of scenarios are planned to help ensure students' safety and the continuity of learning in some form.

## Key Guiding Principles for MEHRD Education System Response

The following 4 key principles guide the entire Education System Response laid out in the ESRSCP:



### Safety of All Persons – Students, Teachers, Principals, School Staff, EAs, MEHRD



Ensure that the physical, mental, and psychosocial health of all persons is prioritised first and foremost.



### Community Engagement & Mobilization



Embedment of public health and education continuity objectives into community



Community-driven and community-led behaviour change and education support



### Continuation of Critical Functions



Ensure that critical functions carried out by MEHRD continue, e.g. payment of teacher and staff salaries.



### Learning Continuity



Provide widely accessible distance learning programme that covers prioritised curriculum/minimum standards for each learning level in multimedia formats



Embedment of community-directed learning into programme



Support for school leaders, teachers, and parents/guardians for at-home-learning as well as for return to school processes

# RATIONALE FOR THE APPLICATION

## Rationale Context

An initial total budget of SBD\$137 million (\$16.78m USD) was approved to support Solomon Islands' fight against COVID-19 and to prevent and prepare for the eventuality of it emerging within the country. Of this budget, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) was initially allocated SBD\$31 million (\$3.8m), which was primarily dedicated to the repatriation of overseas students, and some additional costs relating to more immediate preparation of the ministry to respond to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, just one week after the third ever national State of Emergency (SOE) was declared by the Governor General, Sir David Vunagi, on 25<sup>th</sup> March, Cyclone Harold hit Solomon Islands on 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020<sup>10</sup>. This caused widespread devastation to the infrastructure (Tropical Cyclone Harold DFAT, 2020) and tragically 27 people were lost at sea attempting to flee the capital, Honiara, for fear of contracting COVID-19 (The World Bank, 2020).

The Solomon Islands were fortunate to have received humanitarian assistance from DFAT in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone and specifically for COVID-19 have secured a total of \$26m in loans and grants from ADB as part of its Pacific Disaster Resilience Program (Phase 2) (ADB, 2020a) (ADB, 2020b). In addition to seeking funding from GPE, they have secured additional support through UNICEF and Education Support Sector Strategy partnership, which will cover a partial roll-out of COVID-19 training to schools.

However, the nature of emergency response is unpredictable and an increased potential for suddenly escalating demands is a very real concern for the Solomon Islands – for whom it is therefore essential that an accelerated response is available. The importance of preparedness for mitigation cannot be overemphasized; as Sir David put it,

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*“Solomon Islands will only be safe if COVID-19 does not enter Solomon Islands”.*

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SOURCE: (ASIA & THE PACIFIC SOCIETY, 2020)

Apart from the weakness of the health systems, which could mean the country being devastated by a pandemic, there is much more at stake. As is evident from the double emergency in April, Solomon Islands are relatively likely to suffer from multiple crises simultaneously. The nation has

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<sup>10</sup> Asia & The Pacific Society, 2020

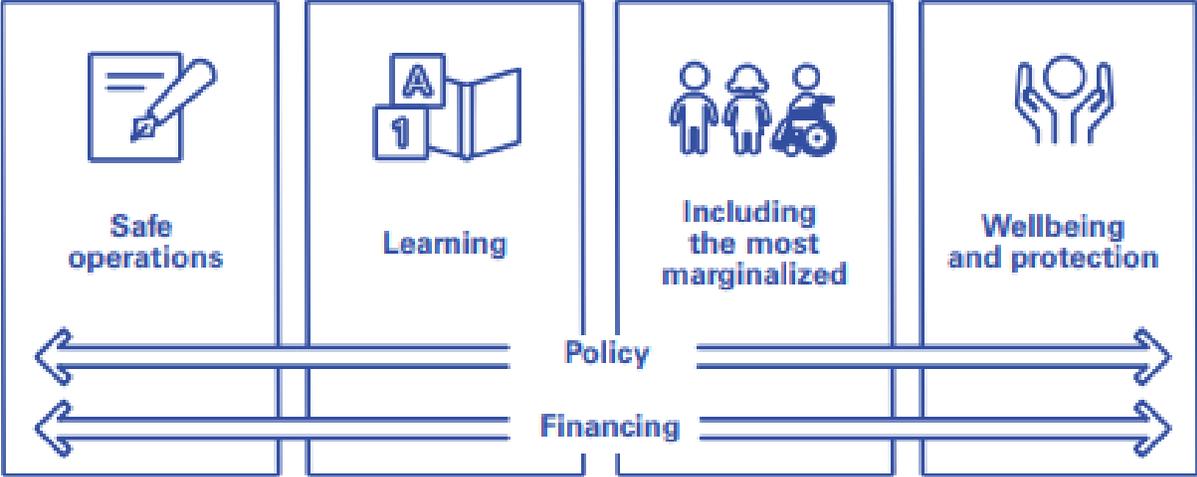
the 5<sup>th</sup> highest risk index ranking worldwide in 2020 (Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, 2020). When compromised with an already very limited resource base, the effect over time can be significantly compounded to crippling levels.

This means preparedness for recovery of the setbacks already suffered is equally vital to mitigation, as while there is still a vast, unplugged learning gap in education, the risk of another crisis worsening it, and vice-versa, remains very real and relatively very likely.

The SOE has now been extended till 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (Garda, 2020). There remain no reported cases within the entire country, the borders remain closed and all schools have been reopened since May 2020 (Kekea, 2020)(MEHRD, 2020) (source: ESRSCP). Currently, recovery of the education system is the mainstay of MEHRD output priorities covering all potential scenarios in the next 18 months as analyzed by the ESRSCP and subsequent MEHRD reviews of its May 2020 deliverables.

What this means in terms of immediate necessity – and the rationale for Accelerated Funding in education – is that, in line with the UNICEF Framework for Reopening Schools (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank & WFP, 2020), there are broadly two key areas for which rapid preparation is needed: fully inclusive student welfare and learning. “Fully inclusive” in this context means that it is essential to include and have specific, targeted plans for the most vulnerable and marginalized students, as experience from previous outbreaks shows that epidemics exacerbate existing inequalities, including those based on economic status, ability, age and gender (UNICEF, 2020).

Figure 1: Figure 1 Framework for School Re-opening (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, WFP)



In turn, this may result in possible disengagement from the curriculum and school drop-outs for these groups of children (Save the Children, 2020). Given that net enrolment rates have been low especially for junior and senior secondary, less than 20% of children completing junior and senior

secondary, many overage children enrolled across grades and given that school attendance is strongly correlated with student success (NCES, n.d.), this is a critical and urgent area for up-front investment to ameliorate the increasing likelihood of detriment to these children in the era of COVID-19. The negative effects of non-attendance for these children are extensive – including teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation, child marriage, violence and child labour – and are explored in greater depth under the Proposed Areas of Intervention.

Inclusive welfare and learning are holistic and symbiotic concepts and belong in both school and community environments.

Therefore, the priority outcomes identified as the most urgent and success-critical for the overall ESRSCP are the strengthening of school and community capacities towards inclusive welfare and learning, and (with a full degree of overlap), improving equity of access.

In response, this proposal focuses on capacity building, communication for development, and partnership with all families and communities as critical to forging effective education responses to COVID-19 at school and community level.

## **Rationale for External Funding Application**

An initial total budget of SBD\$137 million was approved by the Government of the Solomon Islands to support the country's fight against the infectious disease and to prevent and prepare should it emerge into Solomon Islands. Of this budget, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development was initially allocated with \$31 million, which was primarily dedicated toward repatriation of students and some, more immediate, costs relating to the resourcing of the Ministry with hygiene supplies and other more immediate preparation issues.

In the months since the Pandemic was declared, staff within the MEHRD, across all departments, have made preparation, prevention, and response their immediate priority, working to implementing their response and prevention plans. They are further coordinating the various responding agencies' COVID and cyclone response, ensuring a coherent and effective set of responses. The investment of human resources, and existing finance, has been substantial, with all departments and most staff making COVID-19 a priority in their thinking, planning, and activity through the implementation of the national COVID-19 Education System Response Plan.

However, just as planning and action for COVID-19 were starting, the Solomon Islands was hit by a cyclone, with substantial damage caused to education infrastructure and systems, not to mention the myriad challenges facing staff, students, and teachers. This has resulted in a need for already strained financial resources to be dedicated to more immediate reconstruction and cyclone response activities, with limited additional funding available for prevention or response to an illness which has not yet begun to spread in the Solomons.

For this reason, the MEHRD is approaching several donors to provide financial support complementing their substantial investment of human resources and Ministry capacity. The primary areas and activities being targeted for external support focus on strengthening and improving the resilience of the education sector, and in pre-creation, distribution, and establishment of resources, systems, and approaches to minimise the impact of COVID-19 should it arrive on the islands; this preparation and focus on prevention is of particular importance due to the weak public health, social welfare, and protection systems extant in the Solomons.

Additional funding and support is being requested from three primary donors or funding agencies/partners (DFAT, UNICEF, and GPE). The body of this proposal comprises the main application for funding to GPE; the table below seeks to present those activities and funds supported by the other named agencies, and (where appropriate) how they complement the activities within this application:



## UNICEF

UNICEF has supported MEHRD through technical assistance and programme funding towards COVID-19 response, in addition to the support on regular education programming. Activities undertaken to date include:

- ◆ Development, printing, and dissemination of COVID-19 Prevention and Control Guidelines for schools;
- ◆ Development and dissemination of guidance for parents to support children's learning with focus on children with disabilities
- ◆ Technical support for development of the MEHRD's COVID-19 Education System Response Scenario Planning document.
- ◆ Technical support and capacity development/augmentation for the implementation of COVID-19 response activities, with additional focus on inclusion, disability, and gender.
- ◆ Additional technical support, guidance, and coordination to the ministry in other relevant areas.



## Solomon Islands (through MEHRD), Australia (DFAT) and New Zealand (MFAT) Partnership

The SI-AUS-NZ Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) 2019-2023 is a key partnership in the sector that is also providing some support to COVID-19 related activities, through elements of sector budget support, technical assistance, and NGO

grants. The ESSP is delivered through a combination of Sector budget support (to MEHRD's Annual Workplan); capacity development and advisory support; and targeted grants to NGOs. Delivery is supported through a contracted Programme Management Team. In the COVID-19 context, the ESSP has pivoted to respond to emerging needs through the activities it supports through budget support to MEHRD (linked to the ESRSCP), through technical advisory support and through COVID-19-related grants to NGOs.

Under the ESSP, funding support for an amount 729,000 AUD (512,250 USD) has been provided to UNICEF for a range of activities which directly complement those within this application; the linkage and complementarity between ESSP-funded activities and those in this plan are explicitly addressed within the strategies section. The funding is aimed to strengthen capacities of school communities towards COVID-19 education response.

DFAT through ESSP has also supported a partnership with Save the Children to deliver COVID-19 related activities in the sector which is important initiative to ensure close coordination and alignment with accelerated funding supported activities.

It is anticipated that through the combined government capacity and donor funds, and through the additional international capacity the donor funds are anticipated to create, a faster, more comprehensive response can be undertaken, with accelerated funds contributing to the effective preparation of the Solomon Islands' education sector to respond to COVID-19 in the event of its emergence and spread throughout the country. The selected activities have been further chosen for their ability to impact positively on the strength of the Solomon Islands' education sector, seeking to address those issues which can effectively address both COVID-19 mitigation concerns as well as the broader issues facing the Solomon Islands' education sector independent of any pandemic-generated challenges.

# PROPOSED AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The proposed areas of intervention are fully aligned with, and complementary to, those of the ESRSCP, emphasising those aspects of the plan requiring the most urgent and immediate implementation. The ESRSCP, in turn, is expected to deliver the goals of the Solomon Islands Education Strategic Framework 2016-30, by means of its contribution to the 2016-20 and 2021-25 NEAPs and, by means of sustainable implementation (such as with innovative distance learning modalities), possibly beyond. This knock-on effect and harmony between different levels of national strategy planning in education are informed by the Theory of Change.

## Theory of Change (ToC)

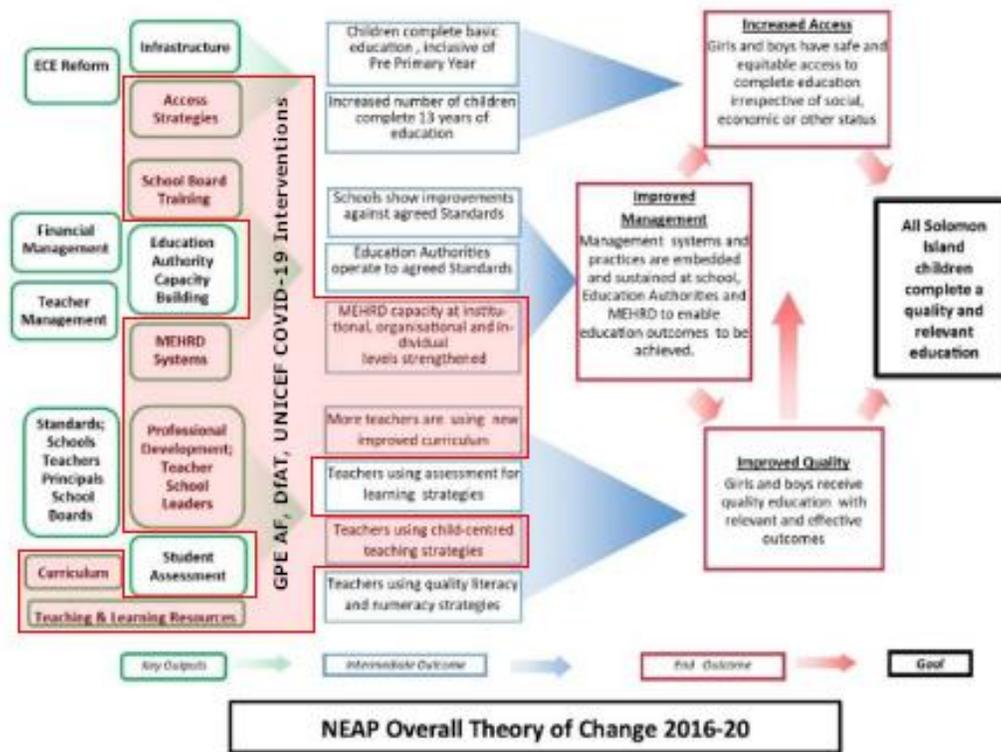
In line with the Grant Agency's (UNICEF) Theory of Change approach, GPE's 2020 Strategic Plan and M&E Strategy, the intervention is structured in interconnected chains of outputs (immediate-term results) and outcomes (mid-term results) towards an overall impact (long-term result).

This is a useful tool for structuring the plan with clear activities, costings and responsibilities in a consistent manner – with the caveat that by the linear nature of its structure, the representation of complexity of inter-relations and cross-cuts between its components is sacrificed for ease of visibility. Inevitably, this leads to a degree of repetition, but such provides a useful real-time M&E opportunity to gauge consistency and sense-check each component.

In terms of the current 2016-20 National Education Action Plan (NEAP), the desired impact is improved access, management and quality of education. This is achieved through a large number of interdependent, cross-cutting key outputs and intermediate outcomes.

Included among these is a definite subset of outputs centred on Access Strategies, School Board Training, Professional Development, strengthened and embedded MEHRD Systems, and enhanced Teaching & Learning Resources. These are expected to bring about a number of key changes, central to which is that MEHRD capacity at institutional, organisational and individual levels is strengthened:

*Figure 2 - Alignment between NEAP and this Application for Accelerated Funding*



SOURCE: MEHRD MELP

Essentially, these subsets of the NEAP align with the Theory of Change for the Accelerated Funding Proposal. Although these are not exclusive of the other inputs, in the context of this Proposal, there are 6 outputs, toward achieving 3 outcomes, aimed at meeting 1 overall objective – or impact – which is to have strengthened capacity for fully inclusive learning, safety/protection and well-being, in schools and at home, during the pandemic and beyond. The Theory of Change allows for the chain of all outputs and outcomes to be amalgamated into grouped subsets, which become key outcomes critical to the overall impact. In this case, doing so clearly evidences how the accelerated component of the overall plan is both completely complementary to it and critical to its success. The diagram demonstrating this application’s theory of change can be found below:

Figure 3 - AF Application Theory of Change (TOC)

### Impact:

Strengthened capacity of national education system and school communities to support inclusive remote learning, safety/protection and well-being of children and families, during the pandemic and beyond



### Outcome 1

Strengthened school and community capacity (of families, school management committee members, teachers, school leaders and provincial education authorities) to promote children's education, safety/protection and well-being, both in schools and at home, during the pandemic and beyond



### Outcome 2

Improved equity of access to education, especially for vulnerable and marginalized children through effective coordination and management of the response plan well informed by critical Learning from Evidence practices and systems



### Outputs

1.1: Parents and caregivers / families receive messages on how they can support children's learning and wellbeing and help in sustaining COVID-19 related preventative behaviours during pandemic and beyond

1.2: Students receive messages directly on how they can support their own learning and wellbeing and help in sustaining COVID-19 related preventative behaviours during pandemic and beyond

1.3: Referral systems in schools strengthened, within existing policy framework for child protection in education, particularly for severe cases. Providers are aware of other care services, including referral to services for Gender Based Violence (GBV)/Psychosocial Emotional Awareness (PSEA) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Ensure youth-friendly and fully accessible.

1.4 Increase financial assistance to Learning Continuity  
(1) to prepare for future school closures,  
(2) to strengthen teaching and learning where closures remain in effect and



### Outputs

2.1: Improved recovery and overall provision of education for disadvantaged students

2.2: Addressing re-enrolment issues and school dropouts (out-of-school kids), via financial support, addressing fears of infection, possible disengagement and negative psychosocial experiences.

2.3 Strong learning from evidence activities undertaken

(3) to supplement instructional hours with a blended model, where schools may be operating on partial or otherwise adapted schedules.

Further to UNICEF's Theory of Change guidance, a detailed breakdown of the various possible risks to this theory of change, as well as the proposed responses/mitigations of those risks, can be found in the appendices of this application document.

The Theory of Change aligns with MEHRD's Education System Response and Scenario Plan further enables the production of Results Framework (RF). This gives us a clear foundation instrument that is used to monitor and manage progress and report on delivery of the results of the NEAP; this has served as the basis for the appended M&E framework, as well as its component indicators. With these systems in place, the change caused by the project interventions can be accurately measured and understood in terms of those interventions as measurable causes.

## **Targeting of Programme Beneficiaries – Focus on the Most Vulnerable and Marginalised Children**

Towards maximising change, every one of the project interventions must be focused on vulnerable and marginalised children.

As we have seen, of the Solomon Islands' school age population of 314,067 (UNESCO, 2020) (UNESCO, 2020), there are already significant numbers of students marginalised simply by not (ever) having been enrolled in school. In secondary school, this equates to 73% of all eligible girls and 68% of all eligible boys – which also evidences gender-bias in the dropout rates transitioning from primary to secondary education. There are a number of cross-cutting factors that can cause vulnerability and marginalisation in Solomon Islands, to the detriment of learning and life chances. These include age, gender, disability, gifted and talented students, geography, child labour and poverty. All these are likely to be exacerbated by the psychosocial effects of limited social contact with peers and confinement in the event of school closures or lockdowns.

Outcome 1 – specifically outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 – is geared towards ameliorating the risks associated with these factors. They centre around sensitising parents and communities on remote learning and supporting wellbeing and safety, providing equitable learning materials, strengthening referral pathways, and providing teachers and school leaders with relevant, inclusive training. The corresponding activities are targeted at various student, parent and teacher stakeholders within learning communities. These are bolstered by a platform of SMS-blasts,

television and radio broadcasts and printed material, which will enable marginalised groups to feel reached with some reassurance of regularity and consistency.

Outcome 2 is so critical to the success of this intervention that, while it is implicit in all the activities essential to Outcome 1, it is specifically designated an outcome in its own right, and therefore subject to evaluation as measurables within the M&E framework. Within this, Activity 2.1.1 is specifically to establish a Task Force dedicated to the development of learning materials/platforms, information, services and facilities accessible to people with disabilities and marginalised and vulnerable students to complement or be incorporated into the 12-week cross-curricular learning programme resources from Outcome 1.

**The primary vulnerability, equity and marginalisation factors at work in the Solomon Islands have been described in the sections below:**

### ➤ Disability

As this is a diverse and large group of marginalised children, activities are to be highly sensitive to the vast range of needs and their inevitable cross-cuts with other interventions aimed at reducing vulnerability. For example, Output 2.1 aims to encourage all students who are out of school to attend. This may well give rise to new identifications of children with disabilities who have never enrolled and so boost both enrolment and engagement with this particular group. By enabling these students with access to mainstream education, their chances of future independence and career options are vastly increased.

In the Solomon Islands, little is known about the populations of out-of-school children with disabilities. For enrolled students, the 2017 MEHRD Performance Assessment reported that 'learning disabilities' are the most common, followed by impaired hearing (see Table 2):

Table 2: Number of Students with a reported disability by school type, 2016

	2016					2017				
	PS	CHS	PSS	NSS	Total	PS	CHS	PSS	NSS	Total
Gripping impairment	51	34	0	2	87	39	41	2	0	82
Hearing Impairment	432	380	44	22	878	378	390	38	18	824
Learning Disability	544	477	35	0	1,056	509	405	21	7	942
Mental Disability	65	54	0	0	119	70	48	0	0	118
Moving impairment	60	53	5	3	121	67	62	3	1	133
Multiple Disabilities	39	43	0	0	82	31	19	0	4	54
Other Disability	47	510	0	0	557	22	57	1	0	80
Sight Impairment	140	183	5	34	362	165	146	3	14	328
Speech Impairment	166	66	2	13	247	118	72	3	1	194
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,544</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>3,509</b>	<b>1,399</b>	<b>1,240</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2,755</b>

SOURCE: SIEMIS11

In 2017, it was reported that 2,755 (1.3%) students in primary and secondary levels were identified as having a disability. This is a decrease of 21.3% (754) in 2017 compared to 2016, though the unreliability of the data collection methodology raise concerns over further marginalization of children with disabilities by omission from these data.

For some children with disabilities, the various technology-based remote learning strategies such as radio and asynchronous internet modalities can provide benefit beyond the norms of current classroom schooling, as children are given the opportunity to adjust their engagement to their own pace of learning. For children with restricted mobility, dyslexia or dyspraxia, for example, this can provide a relatively stress-free interface with the curriculum without the daunting demands of disproportionate written work to be submitted for assessment.

Children with hearing impairment, can benefit significantly from tailored interaction with visual and manipulable learning resources. Synchronous internet applications, such as Zoom, where available, enable learning to be finely differentiated and tailored to a wide range of individual needs based on real-time formative assessment.

As learning disabilities are the most common disabilities across primary and secondary years, the design of materials will include differentiated learning activities specifically aimed at challenging these students while maintaining their engagement through the various media modalities being used – for example, using song or colour to consolidate a learning concept.

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<sup>11</sup> The above data has not used any formal assessment protocols. Although it is acknowledged that this methodology does not have any rigour, it makes an attempt to provide a snapshot of students with disability in schools in Solomon Islands. Data presented should be use with caution.

Whilst technology provides enormous potential for students with disabilities, it is acknowledged that many households with disability are disproportionately poorer and may therefore have less access to internet, devices and mobile data than other households. Differentiated learning materials in a variety of accessible formats, including paper-based, will be utilised to enable access to children with disabilities across the socioeconomic spectrum. This is discussed further under the section titled 'Poverty', below.

The activities specified within this application will build upon other activities undertaken by the Ministry and international partners. With Funding support from UNICEF, MEHRD developed a COVID-19 Inclusive Education Materials package which included tips for parents with children with disabilities, printing of sign-language COVID-19 posters, and COVID-19 sign dictionaries. Additional efforts have been made to train teachers in COVID-19 issues from disability schools in Honiara and selected mainstream school in Honiara; additional focus has been placed on undertaking awareness and education campaigns for parents of children with disabilities on the use of the designed materials. These activities form a useful basis upon which additional activity funded through this Accelerated Funding proposal will promote effective use of resources and coordinated response mechanisms for people with disabilities.

### ➤ Geography

Of the Solomon Islands' 347 inhabited mountainous islands and low-lying coral atolls, many are extremely remote and disparate – especially the Santa Cruz Islands to the southeast – with many only accessible by sea. This causes restrictions to access to education as well as many other resources. Inevitably, poverty correlates with remoteness, which in turn correlates with a technological capacity shortfall that can compromise remote learning. Issues such as reporting and accountability structures being compromised due to limited visibility can precipitate GBV and child labour.

However, by contrast, around 13% of the population live in the capital Honiara, with the inevitable cross-cutting difficulties associated with overcrowding, especially in the informal urban settlements (shanty towns) (Chand & Yala, 2020), such as the lack of privacy essential for MHM and strain on resources.

Currently, 22% of the population die of communicable diseases (World Health Organisation, 2018). This has tragic consequences: the fear of the spread of COVID-19 via these conditions led to the deaths of 27 people attempting to flee Honiara during Cyclone Harold in April.

Key to upskilling communities and educational practitioners in dealing with these issues is providing them with intimate knowledge and understanding of the various pressures relating to each geography.

Because activities associated with Output 1.4 are new and aimed at optimising the provision of remote learning modalities across Solomon Islands, they stand a chance of actually improving

the current level of provision of education for children marginalised by geography, and could provide a sustainable system beyond the context of COVID-19.

In this sense, the trialling and honing of remote teaching technologies and familiarisation with the associated issues, by means of *Learning from Evidence*, presents an opportunity for Solomon Islands to enhance their education development long-term.

## ➤ Poverty

Clear extremes exist in the access to educational technology available for poorer population segments. Generally, children from the poorest households are already almost five times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the richest (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank & WFP, 2020). To ensure equity and access for all children, the allocation of remote learning materials developed as Output 1.2 will play a crucial role.

We have seen that there is a significant cross-cut between poverty and geography. Mobile phones are the most available medium and therefore least discriminatory to both factors, so where internet, computer, TV and radio are severely restricted, SMS RapidPro<sup>12</sup> and printed learning materials will be allocated and deployed as a priority towards achieving Output 1.4.

Again, this could have lasting effects beyond the scope of the ESRSCP.

The ESRSCP intervention therefore clearly provides novel opportunities to reach and optimise learning for many types of marginalised and vulnerable children. By increasing the overall use of electronic technology, including regular surveying and monitoring of remote learning/sensitisation activities, such as with RapidPro in Output 1.2, this intervention essentially doubles up as a pilot for more inclusive, and sensitive, education for all. This is likely to have a strong impact on Solomon Islands' overall level of achievement of the NEAPs, towards achieving the overall desired impact of the Education Strategic Framework 2016-2030.

The World Bank (2020) reports: "The broader impacts of COVID-19 have been felt throughout the country with great economic consequences. The government is projecting a -4.9% GDP growth, job losses and disruption to imports and supplies due to the lack of inbound flights." Inevitably, this will lead to a further squeeze on household incomes, and, as discussed, the most vulnerable and marginalized will feel the effect the most.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/rapidpro>

# STRATEGIES

The various strategies and specific activities feeding into the Theory of Change described in previous sections have been broken down in the tables below. Linking to the description of each of the activities funded by this application are linkages to activities funded by other international agencies or donors, as well as any key gender, equity, or inclusion considerations informing activity design.

**Outcome 1:** Strengthened school and community capacity (of families, school management committee members, teachers, school leaders and provincial education authorities) to promote children’s education, safety/protection and well-being, both in schools and at home, during the pandemic and beyond



**Output 1.1:** Parents and caregivers/families receive messages on how they can support children’s learning and wellbeing and help in sustaining COVID-19 related preventative behaviours during pandemic and beyond



## Description

Building upon the activities funded by UNICEF and ESSP (described below), this set of activities focusses on the dissemination of key, evidence-based messages, tools, resources and approaches through four means: radio, television, internet, and SMS. The focus of these efforts is on the strengthening of practices, attitudes, and behaviours which can promote healthier schools and communities, and prevent the spread of COVID-19 should it emerge in the Solomons. These messages will also undertake to promote the availability of key learning resources (described in subsequent outputs), and ensure audiences know how to access them and where to get guidance on their use. Choosing these four means of communication is intended to provide the best level of audience coverage possible considering the various geographic, socio-economic, and technological challenges facing the Solomon Islands.

Messages and advertisements will be professionally produced for radio and television dissemination, seeking to ensure they are well received by target audiences. The project team will monitor relevant ratings and audience data to understand coverage for reporting.

SMS messaging (and wherever possible internet based communication) will make use of the RapidPro systems already in use by the MEHRD in the Solomon Islands; this is a tool which allows for the dissemination of key messages to target audiences, and for SMS recipients to participate in surveys by text message. Messages will be targeted at all mobile phone users in the Solomon Islands (comprising 479,800 total users,

comparable to 73% of the national population), with 50% of all users receiving a message per quarter of programme implementation. Some additional technical assistance has been proposed by this application, supporting the MOE to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to effectively implement this set of activities.



#### **Activities:**

- ❖ Communicate and disseminate key messages and tools on effective risk reduction and preventative behaviours through schools, diverse media channels, community organizations, school management committees (SMCs) and other such similar platforms.
- ❖ Produce and disseminate radio and television broadcasts promulgating key messages on effective risk reduction and preventative behaviours, with linkages to education.
- ❖ Internet dissemination of key messages undertaken through appropriate technology enabled platforms (where applicable and possible).
- ❖ RapidPro interactive and one-way SMS dissemination of key messages undertaken through government SMS blast app provider and WhatsApp to all registered mobile phones, with analytics of resulting data undertaken to understand and improve effectiveness of messaging, needs, and how to improve programming.



#### **Link with other donor and government resources**

UNICEF has supported in the design of COVID-19 prevention and mitigation guidelines for education, whose core messages and tools are anticipated to inform the relevant work funded by ESSP. Additional work has been undertaken by UNICEF on ensuring these messages and guidelines are disability inclusive, with inclusive materials developed and awareness raising undertaken with parents and teachers of children living with disabilities.

The funding through ESSP is then anticipated to support, more specific development of innovative, evidence-driven, engaging, and impactful messaging and communications approaches; The ESSP is also funding some dissemination activities, complementing those to be funded by this application.

The MEHRD is dedicating existing capacities to the coordination and development of messages, as well as to the leadership of relevant advertising and communications initiatives. So too will their EMIS team be closely involved in RapidPro campaigns, given their ongoing use of the system.

Save the Children through ESSP funding is supporting communities to ensure that key messages about COVID-19 reach children and their families in rural areas. This initiative has the potential to contribute to the output.



## Gender, Inclusion, and Equity

All messaging will be designed for inclusivity (building upon the relevant work undertaken by UNICEF), seeking to account for myriad disability, gender, geographic, socio-economic, protection, and other relevant factors and issues. Furthermore, the spread of dissemination and communication approaches was selected to provide the greatest possible coverage of various disability, gender, and socioeconomic populations within the Solomons, making use of all of the most widely-accessed means of communication and public messaging.



**Output 1.2:** Students receive messages directly on how they can support their own learning, wellbeing and personal hygiene and sanitary practices to help in sustaining COVID-19 related preventative behaviours during pandemic and beyond



### Description

Similar to previous activities, this set of messaging focuses on student populations, rather than populations at large. These activities, like those in Output 1.1, will build heavily on the work funded through ESSP and UNICEF, as well as the other work undertaken by the MEHRD to create home learning platforms and resources for students. The messages would cover learning during and after pandemic, self-care, hygiene and sanitary practices and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing (MHPSS).

Student populations will also be targeted as part of the preceding RapidPro activities, with disaggregated targeting and tracking of school age populations as is possible with available information and data.



### Activities:

- ❖ Internet dissemination of key messages on learning during and after pandemic, self-care hygiene and sanitary practices and MPHSS, undertaken through existing online platforms.
- ❖ RapidPro interactive and one-way SMS and WhatsApp dissemination of key messages undertaken through government SMS blast app provider to target student-age population of registered mobile phone users.
- ❖ Integrate these key messages as part of teaching and learning processes in schools



### Link with other donor and government resources

Those activities and resources described in Output 1.1 remain relevant in this Output 1.2. MEHRD's existing work on home learning approaches for students and ESSP supported activities on building capacities of school communities for COVID-19 education response will also support work undertaken on this Output area, building upon the previous investments of human and financial capital made by the Ministry.



## Gender, Inclusion, and Equity

All messaging will be designed for inclusivity (building upon the relevant work undertaken by UNICEF), seeking to account for myriad disability, gender, geographic, socio-economic, protection, and other relevant factors and issues. Furthermore, the spread of dissemination and communication approaches was selected to provide the greatest possible coverage of various disability, gender, and socioeconomic populations within the Solomons, making use of all of the most widely-accessed means of communication and public messaging.



**Output 1.3:** Child Protection identification, reporting, response and referral systems in schools strengthened, particularly for serious cases. Providers are aware of the procedures and their responsibilities under the system, including referrals to appropriate care, protection, and support services. Ensure youth-friendly and fully accessible



### Description

Technical assistance will be contracted to develop a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for school communities on child protection including GBV issues, to strengthen identification, reporting, response, and referral systems in schools. Global evidence suggests during COVID-19 related school closure, children especially girls and children with disabilities are at increased risks of gender-based violence and sexual abuse, neglect, psychosocial and emotional stress. The SOPs would be strengthening the referral system at school level consistent with the draft Child Protection in Education Policy and the national Child Protection Referral Pathway and would capacitate schools to support children and families facing the risk of the specific issues. The SOPs would enable to develop better identification, reporting, and coherent referral pathway to ensure children and families receive continuous support as needed. The SOPs would be piloted and finalized and integrated in the existing in-service trainings of teachers and heads of schools. Implementation guidance and regular monitoring of implementation of the SOPs will be integrated in existing implementation, monitoring and inspection mechanisms of MEHRD.



### Activities:

- ❖ Development of the Standard Operating Procedure, consistent with the Child Protection in Education Policy, and relevant manuals, implementation guidance and training materials, for the identification, reporting, response and referral of children in need of care and protection.
- ❖ Implement Child Referral Pathway stakeholder training for key child protection issues, integrated with SoP audit/assessment via training feedback channel, in which all training

materials and SoPs are to be shared electronically before and after training with MEHRD by each school.



### **Link with other donor and government resources**

The existing funding through ESSP is being used to develop a complementary training package, focussing on: relevant issues in children’s education (eg. Learning during and after a pandemic), safety/protection (eg ensuring safe school operations including effective WASH practices and child protection mechanisms), and well-being (eg. Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing) during the pandemic and beyond. The ESSP funding is also providing support for master training delivery of designed training packages to complement those resources requested in this output 1.3. The funding is also supporting similar training packages for school committees, provincial education authorities, and other relevant parent-led school oversight mechanisms on similar issues; training delivery funded through ESSP for these stakeholders will incorporate messages and outcomes from resources designed using GPE funding.

UNICEF is anticipate to contribute to inclusion-related elements of designed training packages, providing both financial resources, as well as technical expertise from the country and regional offices.

The Ministry is anticipated to provide coordination, and technical inputs on the development of the materials, as well as provide master trainers from relevant departments to deliver training. Similarly, academic supervisors and inspectors will follow-up on training, and ensure relevant SOPs, systems, and processes are implemented as required, with relevant findings informing learning from evidence processes (as appropriate)



### **Gender, Inclusion, and Equity**

All training delivered will have an extensive focus on relevant issues in GVB, protection, and inclusion, across education and protection-focussed materials and training. Similarly, all approaches used, and materials developed, will undertake to gender-, disability-, and vulnerability sensitive, promoting inclusiveness and equity in all activity delivered with GPE funding.



### **Output 1.4: Increase financial assistance to Learning Continuity**

- (1) to prepare for future school closures,
- (2) to strengthen teaching and learning where closures remain in effect and
- (3) to supplement instructional hours with a blended model, where schools may be operating on partial or otherwise adapted schedules.



## Description

Output 1.4 aims to ensure Learning Continuity by increasing financial assistance in this area. The activities associated with this output are aimed at optimising the provision of remote learning modalities across Solomon Islands, and could therefore improve the current level of provision of education for children marginalised by geography, or other exclusionary factors such as disability thus providing a sustainable system beyond the context of COVID-19.

This will begin with the development of a 12-week, cross curricular home-learning programme for every level of education; this is intended to serve as a 12-week 'learning bridge' in the event of another school shutdown. The materials will be developed by the MEHRD, with the support of a TA, with the TA taking care to ensure effective capacity development and skills transfer to relevant members of the MEHRD. Additional steps will be taken by the team to create a plan for revision, as well as further materials development, to be led independently by the MEHRD.

Once the learning programme has been developed, it will be prepared for deployment in paper and digital formats (including accessible formats for students with disabilities), with a selected number of paper documents printed for selective distribution in the event of need. Digital formats will undertake to be interactive and interesting, and usable across a variety of platforms, including computer, mobile, and other relevant digital means. Once prepared, preceding advertising and dissemination activities (radio, TV, internet, SMS) will incorporate messaging on how and where to access relevant materials, and where to secure guidance on their use.

An additional initiative, also led by MEHRD and supported by an international TA, will undertake development of systems, tools, and approaches for teachers and schools to monitoring student use of independent learning programme materials. Relevant messages and information may be embedded within the training activities (ESSP-funded) described in preceding outcomes, seeking to maximise the combined impact of funding mechanisms and linked activities. The TA funded by GPE will also undertake workshops and trainings for key staff within the MEHRD, and any relevant local education authorities who can attend.



## Activities:

- ❖ Develop 12-week cross-curricular home-based learning programme for all levels (incl. Pre-Primary Years) building upon MEHRD's learning continuity plan and other relevant resources and initiatives to support continuity of learning.
- ❖ Ensure transfer of skills to MEHRD staff through training and meetings in order to develop a 12-week cross-curricular home-based learning programme for all levels (incl. Pre-Primary Years).

- ❖ Develop plan and tools for pilot testing of the home learning programme and conduct pilot testing of the programme using different modalities. The home learning programme will be disseminated as part of the piloting process. The paper-based format will be provided for those children and families who do not have access to internet, devices or digital platforms. MEHRD will hold consultative workshops for developing the pilot plan which will include teachers, school leaders and school management committee members. The workshops would enable MEHRD in identifying sample number of families and children from across provinces, who have access and those who do not have access to internet, devices and digital platform. MEHRD's current school wise data on internet connectivity across the country would also be used to inform the pilot planning process.
- ❖ Develop an implementation plan (inclusive of monitoring plan) on adoption of a variety of learning modalities and systems for home learning programme with particular emphasis on context-relevant design, ensuring equity-based and inclusive approaches (considering children with disabilities, gender, vulnerable communities, remote islands, etc.). This should also include inputs and guidance on the holistic support, engagement and empowerment of education personnel, caregivers/parents and children – such as psychosocial and wellbeing support, messages/information for caregiver/parents (e.g. guidance on home-based learning, responsive caregiving, etc.), guidance/training and active roles for teachers and other school officials in monitoring and supporting student engagement and learning across diverse modalities. It will also include technical inputs and guidance on clear and feasible monitoring plans that capture student learning and enable an after-action review not just of availability or provision of education services, but effectiveness of that system to ensure learning for children.
- ❖ Disseminate the 12-week learning programme resources nationally, using digital and paper-based means as appropriate to ensure children and families are aware and have the knowledge of using this programme when schools close.



#### **Link with other donor and government resources**

As mentioned previously, the funding through ESSP are supporting the delivery of training (using master trainers) for teachers and schools in effective education practices during and after the pandemic. These training sessions will endeavour to include information on the independent learning programme materials, as well as effective teacher deployment and engagement with relevant materials, systems, and approaches.

The Ministry is anticipated to provide coordination, and technical inputs on the development of the materials, as well as provide master trainers from relevant

departments to deliver training. Additional curriculum and materials inputs (drawing on resources already developed within the Solomon Islands) will be used in materials development as part of this Output, minimising cost and promoting continuity and alignment of materials to the national curriculum. Use of relevant existing platforms for digital learning (developed and maintained by the MEHRD) will be used in the deployment of relevant learning materials.



### **Gender, Inclusion, and Equity**

All training delivered will have an extensive focus on relevant issues in GVB, protection, and inclusion, across education and protection-focussed materials and training. Similarly, all approaches used, and materials developed, will undertake to gender-, disability-, and vulnerability sensitive, promoting inclusiveness and equity in all activity delivered with GPE funding.

It is further anticipated that distance learning materials and programmes can contribute to extending educational access to relevant vulnerable or excluded groups, addressing key challenges in access experience by girls, children living with disabilities, and children living in remote areas.

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**Outcome 2: Improved equity of access to education, especially for vulnerable and marginalized children through effective coordination and management of the response plan well informed by critical Learning from Evidence practices and systems**



## **Output 2.1: Improved recovery and overall provision of education for disadvantaged students**



### **Description**

This activity focuses on the creation of a strong Task Force, and hiring of key expertise and consultants as appropriate, to address matters relating to inclusion, gender, and equity across the activities and materials developed for this, ESSP, and other relevant funding mechanisms, as well as those activities undertaken independently by the MEHRD. It is likely this task force will also support relevant coordination activities at national Cluster level, and across other relevant coordination mechanisms.



### **Activities:**

- ❖ Establish a Task Force dedicated to the development of learning materials/platforms, information, services and facilities accessible to people with disabilities and marginalized and vulnerable students to complement or be incorporated into the 12-week cross-curricular learning programme resources.



### Link with other donor and government resources

This Task Force will guide all activities undertaken with ESSP, GPE, and other relevant funds, and will draw heavily on the existing expertise and human resources offered by the MEHRD and UNICEF. The MEHRD will, once again, lead this task force, making substantial contributions with existing human and financial resources.



### Gender, Inclusion, and Equity

The entire purpose of this Output is on promoting and addressing relevant issues in equity, gender, inclusion and marginalisation; it is hoped this task force, and supporting TAs, will promote substantial impacts for the country moving ahead.



**Output 2.2:** Improve financing to new recovery needs for disadvantaged students, to include strategies to tackle re-enrolment issues and school dropouts (out-of-school kids) - addressing fears of infection, possible disengagement and negative psychosocial experiences.



### Description

Given that the size of the AF grant is limited, and that there hasn't yet been any COVID outbreak in the Solomon Islands, it was thought a good use of resources to commission research into effective use of financing to tackle re-enrolment and dropout issues in the event of an outbreak. International cases will be studied, as well as a variety of other strong evidence bases, on the best approach to resolving such challenges within the Solomon Islands' resource-constrained context. An overview of possible response, and supplementary funding, options will be presented as part of this research, leading to a set of recommended intervention designs which will (ideally) be designed to respond to the multiple scenarios informing the MEHRD's own planning for COVID-19 response.



### Activities:

- ❖ Undertaking research, leading to recommended response design, to best address re-enrolment and drop-out issues in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak.



### Link with other donor and government funding mechanisms

UNICEF is expected to provide substantial technical capacity and expertise in the delivery of this research and programme design exercise, with a depth of experience in similar initiatives internationally it is well placed to provide this support. The MEHRD will continue to lead activities, and provide internal capacity to support the research undertaken by the TA.



## Gender, Inclusion, and Equity

Matters of ensuring gender, inclusion, and other equity considerations will comprise a core focus of re-enrolment and dropout intervention design; seeking to address historical inequities through future intervention will be a strong priority through the research and subsequent design activities.



### Output 2.3: Strong learning from evidence activities undertaken



#### Description

Seeking to ensure the principles of learning from evidence are implemented within this response, MEHRD through technical support from UNICEF will undertake development of a Learning from Evidence Plan, satisfying GPE guidance on this topic.

Learning from evidence activities will include, review of performance against targets, reviews of monitoring data as part of Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting. As needed strategic planning would be undertaken, seeking to achieve those targets and implement those activities specified within the activity plan linked to this proposal. On a half yearly basis, a formal Learning from Evidence Review Workshop will be undertaken, led by NDOC Education at MEHRD; the response plan, and activities, will be reviewed (and revised as appropriate) in light of collected evidence during these quarterly meetings, seeking to ensure that learning from evidence principles are observed. These meetings will be undertaken virtually, to minimise cost and to minimise any potential risks from COVID-19 infection.

This output will also include a final review process, to be undertaken by an independent consultant, which will seek to establish the summative learning from evidence questions posed by the GPE, as well as any additional questions posed by the government and implementing partners. This independent review will result in the implementation of a Final Review Dissemination Workshop (again to be virtual), which will provide an opportunity for all key stakeholders to learn from the process of Plan implementation, and in time incorporate those learnings into the implementation of other activities led both by the government and its international partners.



#### Activities:

- ❖ Learning from evidence would be a standing agenda for all SMT meetings undertaken throughout implementation<sup>13</sup>. Virtual workshops to be undertaken, minimising cost and COVID-19 risk.

<sup>13</sup> Can also be accomplished by standing agenda items on Monthly SMT meetings.

- ❖ Half yearly evidence workshops, collating data collected across all monitoring means<sup>14</sup>; dynamic adaptation of plans and activities to be undertaken on basis of evidence gathered, seeking to strengthen impact of activities.
- ❖ Final Review undertaken by independent consultant, seeking to establish all summative learning from evidence questions posed by GPE (see M&E section of narrative for more information). Human interest stories/case studies will be shared as part of the review.
- ❖ Final results dissemination and learning from evidence workshop, to include all implementing and consulted partners and stakeholders.



### **Link with other donor and government resources**

Learning from evidence activities described in this output will cover not only GPE activities, but all other activities relating to the Solomon Island's COVID-19 mitigation and response. This is intended to promote comprehensive learning, dynamic response, and more collaboratively impactful interventions.

The MEHRD will be leading learning from evidence activities, drawing on some supports offered by UNICEF; Ministry capacity, staff, and stakeholders will lead this process largely independently of donor funds, making a substantial contribution to effective learning from evidence.



### **Gender, Inclusion, and Equity**

Gender, inclusion, and equity matters will underpin all learning from evidence activities and processes; addressing relevant needs, while promoting improved equity and inclusion, will comprise a primary focus of all learning from evidence activity, and resultant modifications to implementation.

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<sup>14</sup> Can also be accomplished by core COVID response working team (comprising representatives of Ministry and all Implementing Partners), reporting and advising SMT on quarterly basis.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

MEHRD will take the lead in the implementation of the programme in partnership, other relevant government agencies and community groups and NGOs in each of the both nationally and provincially who play a role in education. MEHRD will provide the overall strategic guidance/direction and coordination on behalf of the Government of the Solomon Islands. This will include approving the implementation strategies and approaches and ensuring alignment with both the ESCRP, the NEAP 2016-20, and the Solomon Islands Education Strategic Framework 2016-30. MEHRD will ensure close coordination and alignment with the ESSP supported partnerships for COVID-19 education response. The overall leadership would be provided by the Office of Permanent Secretary, Education in collaboration with Deputy Secretary and Under Secretary, Corporate Services. N-DOC Education, the unit within MEHRD which has been leading COVID-19 prevention and response, shall support the overall coordination for implementation through two of its sub-committees which are MEHRD Communications and MEHRD Learning Continuity Committees. N-DOC education shall coordinate with Strategic Services Division (Strategic Support Unit), Teaching and Learning Division and Corporate Services Division, who shall be responsible for support the implementation (indicated activity wise responsibility in the budget). The Education Support Authority unit within Education Services Division would facilitate the coordination with provincial education authorities and other sub-national entities. MEHRD would also ensure engaging in consultations with Pacific Disability Forum in Solomon Islands in the course of programme design and implementation to ensure inclusivity is adequately addressed all through and the outcomes are relevant for all children including children with disabilities.

The provincial education authorities will play a direct role for effectively implementing the proposed activities for schools and communities in their own provinces supported through mechanisms from MEHRD. MEHRD will work closely with UNICEF in ensuring operationalization is consistent with the agreed plan. They will also support periodic monitoring and advise on adjustments to implementation strategies that may be required to reach the planned results.

The Education Development Partners Coordinating Group (EDPCG) has the role of the local education group for the purpose of this application, as well as for the ESPDG process. During the period of the NEAP 2007-2009, Solomon Islands Government and Development Partners proposed to deepen and widen the engagement of all active development partners in the education sector-wide programme. This was achieved through establishing an EDPCG. The EDPCG provides a mechanism for the coordination and harmonization of Development Partner support to the education sector, facilitating interaction with MEHRD and assisting MEHRD in its

coordination of Development Partners (DPs). Additionally, it is a forum for policy dialogue, information sharing and discussion on issues of aid effectiveness in the education sector. The group comprises all relevant development partners, representatives of civil society organizations, International Education Coordinator at MERHD (Solomon Islands National Commission for UNESCO) and representatives from other relevant divisions within MEHRD.

In the context of COVID-19, EDPCG has been coordinating with the National Disaster Operation Committee (NDOC) of MEHRD which is responsible for the ESRSCP. EDPCG members were also involved in reviewing the ESRSCP while it was being developed and have closely guided development of the accelerated funding proposal for GPE. In coordination with NDOC, EDPCG's role will be to coordinate, review and share information on the overall implementation of the outputs of ESRSCP, including those supported by the accelerated funding through GPE. The EDPCG will promote coordination, collaborations and information sharing between partners and MEHRD, to facilitate coordinated implementation of the activities supported by accelerated funding. EDPCG will also be responsible to ensure a clear alignment of the implementation of GPE-funded activities with those activities being supported through other partnerships (as mentioned above in the application). This group meets regularly and are very active partners in the sector. Due to COVID-19 disruptions, some of the recent meetings have been through online applications and email exchange. Should the situation change due to COVID-19, and physical meetings not be permitted, zoom or other similar applications including email can be used more for remote meetings.

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is the co-chair of the EDPCG and with Australia support a harmonized programme to education in the Solomon Islands. The MFAT post in the Solomon Islands has a staff member with specific responsibility for supporting the education sector and they may call on other education specialists if required from headquarters.

MEHRD proposed to retain the same Grant Agent (UNICEF) and Coordinating Agent (MFAT) for the Accelerated Funding application, as for the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG). These roles had been endorsed by the Education Development Partners Coordination Group (EDPCG) members through the ESPDG process. A follow up communication on the endorsement of the Grant Agent and Coordinating agent was further circulated via email to all EDPCG members on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020 on a no-objection basis and no objections from any EDPCG members were received.

The Coordinating Agent (MFAT) reached out to the EDPCG members for endorsement of the accelerated fund application and EDPCG endorsed the application on 30-09-2020.

To achieve the expected outputs and outcomes detailed out earlier in the application, UNICEF offices in Fiji and Solomon Islands will provide technical support, will be responsible for programme monitoring and reporting. UNICEF staff at Solomon Islands field office, comprising of Education Specialist and Education Officer would provide regular management and

coordination support and would be responsible for programme monitoring and reporting. UNICEF Pacific Multi Country Office (MCO) at Fiji would provide oversight, supervision and support through the Deputy Representative of Programmes, Chief of Education and Education Specialist. UNICEF's Education section at MCO in Fiji will oversee technical quality assurance with specific focus on technical strategy through rigorous planning and activity review processes. In addition, UNICEF staff from other relevant sections like child protection, early childhood development and WASH would provide necessary technical support. As grant agent UNICEF's role includes receiving and managing funds from GPE in alignment with the activities and budgets outlined in the application, agreed by the Ministry and endorsed by the EDPCG. The grant agent's role also includes engaging, managing and providing quality control to the deliverables of the GPE-funded consultancies to complete the work defined by the terms of reference. UNICEF does not do this work in isolation and actively works with other members of the EDPCG to find synergies and efficiencies across programmes to support implementation.

The funds will be managed by the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Office, and specifically by the Education Programme Section. All elements of programme design, implementation, monitoring and reporting will be coordinated with the Ministry in collaboration with the UNICEF Solomon Islands Field Office, drawing on relevant expertise within the UNICEF Pacific Education, WASH, Child Protection, Innovation, Emergency and M&E teams. UNICEF Pacific is also able to access additional technical support through the regional office in Bangkok and Headquarters, as required, but will draw primarily on expertise based in the Pacific.

UNICEF signs annual work plans with the Government of the Solomon Islands, which serve as a basis for all partnerships and programmatic expenditure under the programme. A COVID-19 response is part of the current workplan and will act as an umbrella tool for the work to be implemented under this funding. The current application builds on multiple existing initiatives and a strong existing relationship between UNICEF and MEHRD, ensuring the feasibility of a program start within one month.

The grant will be administered using UNICEF's global internal finance and program management procedures. These procedures include procurement and management of services such as Technical Assistance, procurement of supplies, partnerships, and support of development activities through cash assistance modalities and direct payment as relevant. The UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Office has a full operations team, including Finance, HR, Supply and Logistics, and due to the COVID19 crisis, is able to use L3 emergency fast-track processes to implement activities. UNICEF also monitors programme plans, implementation, results, and fund utilization per global finance and program management procedures. GPE funds will not be used to directly support for-profit private schools or non-state non-profit schools.

UNICEF follows the UN Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) framework in managing the funds and disbursing the same, which includes pre-assessments and regular assurance

activities. HACT provides measures to ensure all funds are properly utilized and accounted for, while making efforts to strengthen national capacities for financial management and accountability, with a view to gradually shift to utilizing national systems and ensure sustainability.

HACT is based on an assessment of the risks associated with transferring cash to implementing partners, including the risk that cash transferred to implementing partners may not be used or reported in accordance with agreements between the agency providing the cash resources and the implementing partner.

According to the UN HACT principle, it is recognized that the level of risk can be different for each Implementing Partner. For each Implementing Partner, UN Agencies effectively and efficiently manage this risk by:

1. Assessing the Implementing Partners' financial management capacity (micro assessment of IP receiving over \$100,000 per year);
2. Applying appropriate procedures for the provision of cash transfers to the Implementing Partner (mitigation measures); and
3. Maintaining adequate awareness of the Implementing Partner's internal controls for cash transfers and proper utilization of resources to beneficiaries through assurance activities like regular financial 'spot checks', programmatic field visits or financial audits.

UNICEF's financial procurement rules and regulations have been included in the appendices of this application.

The implementation arrangements as described are already in place to ensure rapid implementation of the grant supported activities. As described in the application, several activities under COVID-19 response which are currently being implemented shall contribute to the implementation of the grant supported activities, which signifies, the context is well prepared for MEHRD to effectively initiate the accelerated funds supported activities. A strong and integrated coordination structure within MEHRD is already in place which has been effectively leading COVID-19 education response and would be instrumental in implementation of accelerated fund supported activities. The following key actions are underway, which shall facilitate a rapid implementation of the activities:

1. International consultant is already on board providing technical support to MEHRD on COVID-19 response. The consultancy will have an expanded scope to support the development of messages for parents, communities and students under the accelerated grant supported activities.
2. UNICEF is in the process of engaging a technical assistance to support Teaching and Learning Division at MEHRD to coordinate and implement a range of activities on continuity of learning, as per the objectives of ESRSCP. The technical assistance activity

shall contribute to development of the home learning programme with focus on development of range resources for the programme.

3. UNICEF has supported MEHRD in leveraging RapidPro to collect information from school heads as needed and conducted capacity building sessions. Currently UNICEF in partnership with Oxfam is leveraging RapidPro to support establishment of youth led community feedback platform under U-Report. These initiatives can be readily leveraged to ensure rapid implementation of the grant supported activities on sharing messages with parents, communities and students.

UNICEF MCO and Solomon Islands Field Office have strong relationship and partnership through ongoing country work plan with MEHRD and the ministry is very familiar with the mechanisms regarding cash transfers and provision of technical assistance support at UNICEF, which enables faster, effective and accountable processes for timely disbursements towards rapid implementation.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Throughout the programme period, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) will be carried out as per the M&E and result framework (please refer to the enclosed excel sheet where this is provided), which has undertaken to align itself with the Ministry's ESRSCP, relevant SDG indicators, and the GPE's M&E guidance. M&E serves to measure the indicators of achievements (from output to strategic outcome/impact level), mitigate pre-identified and unexpected risk, enhance opportunities, as well as addressing bottlenecks. M&E also identifies, documents and reflects lessons learnt. This helps to ensure accountability, generate evidence and share relevant information among key stakeholders and policy makers to contribute to system strengthening.

In terms of the type of methods, both qualitative and quantitative milestones achieved will be established through the M&E process and multiple means of verifications will be used (e.g. EMIS data, relevant statistics and studies, activity reports, programme evaluation, survey and qualitative data collection including interviews and focus group discussion). Whenever possible and relevant, sampling method will be applied, and standard calculation methodologies utilised. Although the education authorities from the MEHRD will hold ownership of systematic M&E, efforts will be made to include all relevant stakeholders in the M&E process (e.g. teacher, staff, parents, children, ministry staff, and implementing/national partners).

Within the M&E framework, each outcome is measured by respective outcome indicator and under each outcome there are linked outputs each of which is unpacked into measurable indicators. The measurable indicators have been balanced (as far as resources allow) between output and outcome indicators, seeking to ensure that gathered evidence allows for the establishment of outcomes resulting from activity, rather than simply measuring whether money has been spent, training delivered, or outputs achieved. Such a balance focused is important if any effective Learning from Evidence approaches are to be implemented in the course of response plan implementation. Should restrictions on travel and movement preclude field-based data collection and monitoring activities, alternative modalities of M&E will be established and implemented to achieve the objective of M&E as much as possible. (e.g. phone survey, SMS, internet and low-tech tools, etc.).

The team has further undertaken to ensure that those indicators mandated within GPE guidance have been included within the M&E framework; these have been specifically identified where appropriate within that document.

The various Roles and Responsibilities with regard to specific indicator monitoring, data collection and analysis, and other relevant activities has been specified within the M&E plan. Overall responsibility for leadership of the M&E processes and systems will be Office of Permanent

Secretary and Strategic Support Unit, MEHRD in collaboration with UNICEF Solomon Islands Field Office, supported by UNICEF Pacific.

Also, the GA will directly monitor the status and progress of the activities through its institutional M&E structure. Based on the financial risk level, several assurance activities are planned over the course of the partnership implementation. These activities include programmatic visits, spot checks and financial audits which are executed by UNICEF staff from the UNICEF Solomon Islands Country office and UNICEF Pacific Islands office. The frequency of the assurance activities is dependent on the risk level of the implementing partners. The UNICEF Pacific Education team and UNICEF Solomon Islands Country office will support the MEHRD and relevant implementing stakeholders to collect the required information and evidence for reporting and support the mechanisms to support this to be put in place prior to activities commencing. Findings from spot checks and scheduled audits are used to obtain assurance and adjust partnership management strategies accordingly and to structure capacity development support to address identified capacity gaps and, in extreme cases, to suspend and/or terminate partnerships. Additionally, regular program meetings with implementing partners are undertaken at the field level to assess progress made and lessons learned.

UNICEF will submit an annual final and utilization report to GPE no later than six months after completion of activities. In addition, UNICEF will do the standard quarterly and six monthly reporting to GPE. The end-of-program report will summarize achievements, potential deviations from original targets and lessons learned. In addition, an informal mid-year review with stakeholders will be undertaken to ensure program implementation is on track and necessary adjustments are made based on the rapidly changing situation.

## Learning from Evidence

The collection and analysis of indicator data will be in accordance with the principles of the Learning from Evidence Approach, as per the Guidance on monitoring and evaluation of grants financed through the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window. The purpose of this approach is to:

- ◆ **Objective I:** learn continually from evidence and apply that learning adaptively to enhance program effectiveness; and
- ◆ **Objective II:** generate knowledge and evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of grants.

## Objective I - learn continually from evidence and apply that learning adaptively to enhance program effectiveness; and

The learning from evidence plan will be developed as part of Outcome 2, Output 2.3, and the approach will specify how information on the types of populations reached and the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of interventions will be collected, analysed and used adaptively.

The integration of Learning from Evidence approach in Output 2.3 shall ensure that the principles and required activities outlined in GPE guidance are effectively implemented, and that implementation is dynamic, responsive, and informed by emergent evidence on effectiveness and efficiency of implementation.

The MEHRD has so far been successful in this area, and they are building on a strong foundation. The 2017 Performance Assessment states that "in 2017, MEHRD developed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation Results Framework (RF) and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MELP). The RF contains the indicators by which the NEAP will be monitored and measured. The MELP describes how the monitoring and measuring will be undertaken." Since then, according to the Independent Assessment Report of the Solomon Islands Education Sector Program 2 Performance-Linked Aid Payment (2018), "MEHRD has made significant progress in the past 12 months in relation to planning, monitoring and evaluation." The M&E activities required as part of this grant will build upon these effective systems and successes.

## Objective II of Learning from Evidence

Further to the guidance provided by the GPE, a number of questions will be established in the course of Response Plan implementation. The below table specifies whether that question will be resolved at the end of the programme, during the course of implementation, or both; the table specifies whether ongoing monitoring or the final summative report will be the primary or secondary means of establishing each of the questions:

	Relevance		
	<i>The extent to which the grant met the needs of children whose education has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly girls and the most marginalized children, and the extent to which it was aligned to developing country partners' COVID-19 response plans.</i>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Final Rep.</b>
?	Do grant stakeholders (children/teachers/caregivers/school leadership/education administrators etc.) feel the grant is meeting/met their needs? Why or why not?		Primary
?	Were the interventions supported by the grant targeted at the areas and children most in need?		Primary
?	Were the interventions supported by the grant (e.g. educational and instructional materials provided) perceived as meeting the specific needs of girls and the most marginalized children?		Primary
	Effectiveness		
	<i>The extent to which the grant achieved its objectives and how grant activities contributed to the achievement of those objectives. Where feasible, grants are strongly encouraged to evaluate the extent to which grant activities mitigated the learning loss that may have resulted from the disruption to education systems. Where available, grants may leverage existing assessments as baselines (disaggregated by gender and other variables, as available).</i>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Final Rep.</b>
?	To what extent has the grant achieved its output and outcome targets?	Primary	Primary
?	Did the grant address specific barriers to learning faced by girls and the most marginalized children due to COVID-19? How?	Secondary	Primary

?	To what extent did grant components mitigate learning loss that may have resulted from school closure due to COVID-19?		Primary
?	What factors have inhibited or facilitated the achievement of grant goals, objectives, and expected results?	Secondary	Primary
?	Which programs/interventions (if different interventions are deployed) were comparatively more/less effective? Why?		Primary
?	Did grant interventions improve the availability of data required to plan and implement sectoral responses to COVID-19? How?		Primary
?	Did grant interventions support coordinated responses (between external funders, government, and other stakeholders) to COVID-19? How?	Secondary	Primary
?	Did grant interventions build government capacity to respond to COVID-19 and for future response and recovery efforts? How?		Primary

 **Efficiency**

	<i>The extent to which grant resources (inputs) translated into intermediate results (outputs) and whether the same intermediate results could have been achieved with fewer resources.</i>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Final Rep.</b>
?	What was the speed of delivery of education services?	Secondary	Primary
?	Have grant components been delivered within the planned timeline? Why or why not?	Primary	Primary
?	What were the unit costs of delivering the outputs? How do the unit/program costs compare across interventions in terms of reaching the beneficiaries (children/teachers/caregivers etc.)?	Primary	Secondary

# RISK MITIGATION TABLE

Understanding and quantifying risk is an essential part of the fabric of any intervention in the Solomon Islands, whose 2020 Risk Index ranks 5<sup>th</sup> globally at 24.25 (<https://weltrisikobericht.de/english/>)

This risk matrix relates to factors that may impact on the ability of the MEHRD to implement its ESRSCP and for the resources provided by GPE effectively and efficiently to achieve the expected goals and outcomes.

LEGEND	Likelihood	Consequences	Resulting Level of Risk
	A Almost certain	1 Insignificant	L Low
	B Likely	2 Minor	M Medium
	C Possible	3 Moderate	H High
	D Unlikely	4 Major	
	E Very unlikely	5 Severe	

Risk	Potential Impact	L	C	R	Mitigation measures	Responsibility
<b>Natural Disaster</b>						
Natural disaster risk in Solomon Islands (cyclones and droughts)	Devastation to infrastructure a competing cost burden and hindrance to remote access, medical emergencies competing	A	3	H	MEHRD in collaboration with relevant national stakeholders has a contingency plan for COVID 19 which includes all sub sectors of education and focusses on	PS/Senior Management Team (Corporate)

	for hospital beds if simultaneous with COVID-19 emergence, flooding leading to WASH compromise in urban areas				modalities for continuity of learning.  Maintenance and implementation of all cyclone preparedness activities to mitigate impact to the extent possible.	
<b>Access</b>						
Due to travel restrictions among islands, MEHRD staff cannot implement or monitor programme	Travel-based implementation and M&E only	C	4	M	Usage of remote strategies for implementation and M&E (e.g. Zoom, Dropbox)	Corporate (IT) Ed. Services/T&L (monitoring)
Due to transport restrictions, materials developed cannot be delivered to outer islands	Physical resources only	D	3	L	Fully remote learning. Prioritise technological readiness for these target areas.	Corporate (IT) T&L (resourcing)
Internet speed in some outer islands is too slow to access online resources	Lack of reach impacts inclusion and equity. Interactive platforms very unlikely	A	5	H	Limit internet dependency. Prioritise asynchronous online learning where possible. Provide SMS instructions.	Corporate (IT)
Most vulnerable households cannot receive communication transmitted via radios or SMSs	Lack of reach impacts inclusion and equity.	C	5	H	Prioritise physical materials' delivery for these targets.	T&L (resourcing)

	Transmitted learning is not possible					Ed. Services (Liaison with provincial authorities)
<b>Political environment</b>						
Political instability	Political instability may result in delays to program implementation	C	3	L	Ongoing engagement with MEHRD to mitigate any impact of political change.  Support to education generally bipartisan.	Grant agent/Coordinating Agent
<b>Ministry Capacity Constraints</b>						
Insufficient capacity within the Ministry to manage a program of this complexity and nature	Education delivery in an emergency situation is disrupted	D	4	L	EDPCG members to support core MEHRD staff if required.  Additional TA support sourced.  Capacity building plan provides for significant initiatives to build capacity at both individual and institutional level	CA/GA

High number of MEHRD officials become sick and unable to work due to COVID-19	Severe reduction in output potential	E	4	L	Ensure staff safety and wellbeing and the following of appropriate protocols eg social distancing measures in place	Corporate
Ministry and provincial staff working from home causes problems with internal communication and task completion	Ministry cannot mobilise its human resources to undertake key tasks required in the Plan	B	3	M	Internal communication systems and equipment reviewed and upgraded to respond to current situation  Essential staff for COVID Response identified, and tasks defined	SMT  Corporate – IT and Workforce
Poor Ministry, Provincial and school communication	Key plan deliverables are not coordinated so resources and support does not get to schools when required	D	4	L	Rapid assessment of communication requirement for emergency situation  Guidelines for Ministry, provincial and school communication for emergency situation developed and socialised with essential staff  Communications equipment, connectivity and professional development specified in ESRSCP	Corporate (IT) and Ed Services (PEA Liaison)

					Implementation Plan made a priority	
Poor supervision of plan	Ministry leaders and other stakeholders not aware of any issues impacting on achievement of outcomes  Noncompliance with GPE requirements	D	5	M	Bottlenecks identified and issues resolved.  Grant Agent regularly meets with PS/SMT	PS/SMT (SSU for monitoring)  Grant Agent/Coordinating Agent
<b>Partners – Funding, Capacity and Responsibilities</b>						
External funding from partners are not available/or sufficient to implement the program		C	5	H	Maintain ongoing discussions across partners (utilise EDPCG and other modalities) to advocate for the programme with clear linkages to partner mandates. Provide regular updates to demonstrate accountability.	PS/SMT (SSU for reporting and proposal development as necessary)
Implementing partners' capacity to implement the program is low.	Parts of the program dependent on partner deliverables stymied and resource allocation at the	D	3	L	Regular meetings between MEHRD and UNICEF to mitigate issues arising through delays in funding or demands on capacity.	SMT/GA

	expense of current productivity likely				UNICEF Solomon Islands CFO and Education Specialist support MEHRD Taskforce.	
<b>Teaching &amp; Learning Capacity</b>						
Disruption of learning due to COVID-19	School closures and lockdown	B	5	H	MEHRD in collaboration with relevant national stakeholders has a contingency plan for COVID 19 which includes all sub sectors of education and focusses on modalities for continuity of learning.	Education Services Teaching and Learning
There is nonalignment among the weekly contents of radio lessons, on-line lessons and learning packages	Inconsistent progress within age groups and curricula. Lack of learning consolidation or scaffolding opportunities	B	3	M	Monitor alignment and adjust relative progress speeds. Develop materials to be as aligned as possible – including differentiated tasks for differing ability levels and disabilities. Provide open-ended extension tasks. Ensure cross-curricular cohesion and linkage between topics.	Teaching and Learning (T&L)
High number of teachers become sick and unable to work due to COVID-19	Severe reduction in output potential	E	4	L	Ensure social distancing measures in place, usage of masks, have reserve staff	Education Services.

Community Challenges							
Lack of awareness of the virus, its symptoms and ways to mitigate the spread	The virus may spread throughout the population	D	3	L	Provide awareness raising and training to communities, parents / caregivers and teachers and through training support ensure this knowledge is passed onto children	Education Services	
Lack of WASH facilities in school continues	Schools are unable to open safely	C	5	H	Ensure that preparations for this start immediately  Ensure the importance of handwashing is included in all awareness raising and training	Corporate	
Vulnerable children							
Girls required to care for siblings at home during school closures and have decreased access to own learning	Can not participate in learning	C	5	H	Include awareness raising at community level of importance of everyone having access. Offer strategies for time sharing responsibilities	Ed Services (through PEA)	
Further Risks							
Appropriate Technical Assistance may not be available in a timely manner	Inadequate technical support results in failure to deliver key activities	C	4	M	Technical assistance needs analysis completed and reconciled against existing TA availability	SMT/GA/CA	

					Recruitment fast-tracked Advisers and counterparts develop e-solutions for support.	
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# APPENDIX 1 – UNICEF FINANCIAL AND PROCUREMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

UNICEF's financial risk management is aligned to the UN standard Framework Harmonized Approach of Cash Transfers to Implementing Partners. The adoption of the new harmonized approach is a step in implementing the Rome Declaration on Harmonization and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which call for a closer alignment of development aid with national priorities and needs. The approach allows efforts to focus more on strengthening national capacities for management and accountability, with a view to gradually shift to utilizing national systems.

HACT is based on an assessment of the risks associated with transferring cash to implementing partners, including the risk that cash transferred to implementing partners may not be used or reported in accordance with agreements between the agency providing the cash resources and the implementing partner.

According to the UN HACT principle it is recognised that the level of risk can be different for each Implementing Partner. For each Implementing Partner, UN Agencies effectively and efficiently manage this risk by:

1. Assessing the Implementing Partners' financial management capacity (micro assessment of IP receiving over \$100,000 per year);
2. Applying appropriate procedures for the provision of cash transfers to the Implementing Partner (mitigation measures); and
3. Maintaining adequate awareness of the Implementing Partner's internal controls for cash transfers and proper utilization of resources to beneficiaries through assurance activities like regular financial 'spot checks', programmatic field visits or financial audits.

## Micro-assessment

The first stage of the HACT financial management approach is to conduct a Micro-Assessment of the IP's financial management systems. Each micro-assessment concludes with a statement of the overall risk profile related to cash transfers, rated as 'low', 'moderate', 'significant', or 'high'. A 'low risk' rating indicates a well-developed financial system and function control framework. A 'significant risk' or 'high risk' rating is given if the system is more nascent and the control framework is inadequate to assure that cash transfers are used and reported as agreed with the Agencies. The findings of the Micro-Assessment primarily guide the frequency and

coverage of assurance activities (spot checks) and capacity building for enhancing financial systems of the IPs.

The results of the micro assessment are valid for a period not to exceed the duration of the Programme cycle and may extend across Programme cycles. For example, a micro assessment conducted at the beginning of the fourth year of a five-year country Programme cycle will be valid up to the end of the third year of the following country Programme cycle unless there was a change in the IP's management structure or processes and procedures as noted above. If significant changes to an IP's organizational management structure or processes and procedures with respect to the Programme are observed, a new micro assessment may be deemed necessary by the agency during the Programme cycle.

## **Spot Checks**

At a minimum, one (1) spot check is required for all implementing partners reporting more than US\$50,000 expenditures in a year from funds provided by UNICEF. Significant negative spot check findings result in scheduling of additional assurance activities. A spot check is not required in the year when an audit is completed. These visits act as a 'mini audits' of financial expenditure against agreed project budget lines.

## **Audits**

Any IP receiving more than \$100,000 per year might be sampled by HQ for a 'special audit' based on Risk level of that implementing partner. The risk-based audit methodology utilizes a comprehensive process for selecting implementing partners to be audited taking into consideration financial risks, the operating environment and prior audit results. The methodology allows for a robust global risk assessment and the ability to aggregate and analyze the audit results.

UNICEF Pacific went through an internal audit in 2020. The Audit covered both programmatic and financial aspects of the Programme management. Audit reports are available through the normal UNICEF channels.

## **Procurement Procedure**

UNICEF Financial regulation (article XII) obligates all UNICEF country offices and their staff to carry out any procurement (of services and goods) by means of competitive tenders. Major exceptions would be under acute emergency situations or when prices are fixed by some regulatory bodies. Depending on the nature of purchases, either invitation of bid, request for proposals, request of quotations is issued to invite interested service providers.

Those proposals and bids are evaluated by two different panels, 1) technical panel comprising a group of expertise specialized in the area, subjects, items, and 2) financial panel comprising of a variety of officers in UNICEF including supply, financial and Programme units. Financial panel opens and reviews only those proposals that were successful in the technical review. Both evaluation results are tabulated and ranked for the final recommendation. Contract Review Committee whose mandate is mainly to review if 1) appropriate authority has been obtained for making the commitment, 2) The interest of UNICEF and its funds (including donor's contribution) are protected, and 3) the purchasing activities are carried out in conformity with the regulations and rules, then meet and review the whole selection process, and recommend or not recommend for commitment.