

GPE COVID-19 RESPONSE

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

Recommended by: Coordinating Committee (CC)
<p>Committee Consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Coordinating Committee discussed the proposal on March 25, 2020 and showed unanimous support. Given the availability of funds, the Committee's preference was to limit eligibility for funding to 67 ESPIG-eligible countries. The alternative option was to support 87 countries which are ESPDG eligible but would also include 20 countries that are not ESPIG eligible
Board Policy Reference: N/A

1. Objective

The Board is requested to approve a new accelerated funding window in response to COVID-19. This will capacitate governments of partner countries to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their education systems and help recovery.

2. Requested Recommendation

BOD/2020/04-XX–COVID-19 Supporting Response and Early Recovery: The Board of Directors recognizes the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's learning, particularly on girls and the most marginalized. Considering the role of GPE in support of partner governments planning, responding and coordinating action to mitigate impacts on education, the Board:

- Allocates an initial amount of **US\$250 million** from the GPE Fund for the creation of a dedicated funding window focused on COVID-19 response and early recovery (COVID Accelerated Funding Window) as outlined in BOD/2020/03 DOC 01.
- Approves the eligibility criteria for and maximum allocation size from the funding window as outlined in BOD/2020/03 DOC 01 Annex A:
Coordinating Committee Recommendation - 67 ESPIG Eligible Countries; or
Alternative Option – 87 ESPDG Eligible Countries
- Recognizing the need for rapid response in exceptional circumstances:

- a. Delegates authority to the CEO to approve all applications from the funding window, including for global and regional response mechanisms. The Board affirms that the delegation thresholds in place for all other types of grants remain unchanged.
- b. Waives the requirement for a formal grant-level assessment of pre-accredited international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) for allocations above US\$5 million, noting the Secretariat will assess risk as part of the review of any such allocations.
- c. Delegates authority to the Coordinating Committee to oversee the roll-out of the funding window and to approve the following modifications to the funding window if necessary, to successfully respond to the emerging crisis:
 - i. Adjustments to maximum allocation sizes.
 - ii. The amount of funds available for global and regional public goods.
 - iii. Modifications to the *Contributions and Safeguards Policy*¹ to facilitate additional contributions.
 - iv. Review the use of the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window every three months on whether to continue the fund and activities or to recommend to the Board to discontinue the fund and make unspent funds available to the Board for reallocation.
4. Noting that the COVID-19 response is likely to disrupt the implementation of current grants and result in delays to the application pipeline, deferring some disbursements into the next financing period, agrees to increase the maximum financial carryover from 25 percent or US\$500 million to 37.5 percent or US\$750 million for the current 2018-2020 financing period. This is based on the Secretariat's assessment that GPE is likely to have sufficient liquidity to continue to commit and disburse funds for existing and new programs through June 30, 2021.
5. Noting that potential demand for the mechanism may significantly exceed the available funds, determines that the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window is an eligible activity for targeted funding per the *Contributions and Safeguards Policy*, and calls on new and existing sovereign donors, private foundations and the private sector to make additional contributions to the GPE Fund. Such contributions may be notionally allocated to increase the size of the funding window, and there is no restriction on the maximum contribution size that may be provided from a donor.
6. Requests the CEO to provide regular updates to the Board on GPE's response to the pandemic and the impact on operations.

3. Background

3.1 The Coordinating Committee was informed during the week of 16th March by the Secretariat that education systems around the world are heavily affected by the COVID-19 crisis, especially in developing countries. The Secretariat has been working on a coordinated GPE response in consultation with the Coordinating Committee.

3.2 The first phase of the response addresses planning and includes a grant to UNICEF as grant agent to manage a multi-country education sector plan development grant (ESPDG) in the amount of US\$8.8 million that will support up to 87 ESPDG eligible countries. This grant was approved by Alice Albright as CEO as the Secretariat has full delegation for approvals of ESPDGs and given the allocation does not exceed US\$10 million. More specific details will be shared with the Board shortly.

¹ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/contributions-and-safeguards-policy>

3.3 To further assist partner country governments to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 on education systems, the Coordinating Committee proposes that the Board of Directors approve the next phase of GPE's response to support immediate needs and early recovery and approve the creation of a temporary accelerated funding window for COVID-19.

3.4 Should the Board approve the proposal, the Grants and Performance Committee and the Finance and Risk Committee and other committees as relevant will be updated on progress according to their mandates and any approvals made by the CEO. They will also have access to all relevant documentation. Further, their inputs will be sought by the respective Committee Chairs on any related items for decision by the Coordinating Committee in its delegated authority.

ANNEX A: Next Phase of GPE's COVID-19 Response

ANNEX A

NEXT PHASE OF GPE'S COVID-19 RESPONSE: SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN GPE COUNTRIES TO CONTINUE THEIR LEARNING AND SYSTEMS TO RECOVER FROM SCHOOL CLOSURES

Rationale

The COVID-19 crisis is not just a health emergency. As of March 25, 2019, UNESCO reports that 156 countries globally have completely closed their school systems affecting 1.4 billion children and youth. A further 262 million are affected by partial closure making the total 1.76 billion. According to World Bank data as of March 24th, over 630 million children in GPE eligible countries are affected and now out of school. GPE is uniquely placed to support governments in low and lower middle-income countries to plan, respond and coordinate action to mitigate the education impacts of the pandemic emergency. GPE mechanisms provide an existing government-owned approach that can ensure a joined-up response to the crisis and support recovery in the medium-term once schools are able to re-open. GPE can support education sector plans and systems more broadly to pivot to emergency response and mitigation planning; local education groups (LEG), working together with education clusters in countries already facing a humanitarian emergency, can bolster coordination and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of support; and use of government systems will enable mitigation action at scale, allowing to reach the greatest number of children.

The impact of COVID-19 is likely to fall disproportionately on low- and lower middle-income countries and poses a real threat to education development gains and a generation of children. High-income countries have sophisticated mitigation measures in place to support learning out of school which rely on high levels of technology and connectivity. This is not the case in the majority of GPE countries, and for mitigation measures to reach the poorest and most marginalized populations countries need to use appropriate universal approaches. Interruptions to learning have a disproportionate impact on the poorest children, especially girls. For example, there was an increase in pregnancy and a 16-percentage point drop in post-crisis enrolment for girls in Sierra Leone after the Ebola crisis.² Missing high-stakes examinations and/or certification can have lifelong consequences for future learning and employment opportunities. It is therefore essential to support GPE countries to deliver interventions that enable learning to continue and education systems to quickly recover from school closures.

Six goals of mitigation measures during school closures

1. **Continue** learning: sustained high-quality learning continuity programs that reach the most marginalized that make sure that the poorest and most vulnerable have the resources to participate. Prioritize approaches that support teachers and engage teachers in continuity programs.
2. **Protect** children and the education workforce: to support all children and particularly the most vulnerable, implement psycho-social support and address special needs. Prioritize and include teachers so that learning continuity is high quality and systems can bounce back quickly when schools reopen.
3. **Know** that learning is happening: using assessment to track progress and collecting other data to inform and adapt delivery.
4. **Include** the most marginalized: identifying and addressing specific poverty and gender barriers to continuing learning, which will be exacerbated by the economic shock.
5. **Re-open** as soon as it is safe - preparing the system, teachers and schools after long closures and difficult circumstances and supporting education financing after the economic shock of COVID-19.

² Bandiera et al (2018) The Economic Lives of Young Women in the time of Ebola: Lessons from an empowerment programme, J-PAL

6. **Close** the gap in learning – remedial and accelerated learning programs will be necessary for many to prevent lasting impact on their education.

Illustrative examples of support: from mitigation to recovery and reopening of schools

1. Production of learning continuity programs broadcast through radio, tv, and online, and the provision of resources such as radios, textbooks, study guides and equipment to the poorest. This can be accompanied through free call-in numbers for asking questions, or through establishing a remote tutoring service using toll-free numbers at a local level.
2. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and teachers; make sure that children with special educational needs and disabilities are included in continuity of learning programs. Provide appropriate psycho-social support to children and teachers.
3. Conducting sample assessments at different grade levels to track progress in key areas like early grade literacy and numeracy and key subjects at secondary. This is essential to know who is being reached and how well students are learning so that interventions can be adapted accordingly.
4. The poorest will be affected the most by economic shocks (household income in Sierra Leone fell from US\$336 to US\$131 during the Ebola epidemic and there was an increase in girls getting pregnant). Interventions will likely be needed to protect the poorest and most vulnerable and enable them to continue learning, such as conditional cash transfers.
5. Officials and teachers may have been on other duties or forced to leave their jobs. Crisis and post-crisis education budgets will be under pressure but for rapid and effective recovery national systems must keep their teachers. It is essential to support them through the crisis, enable them to support continuity of learning and prepare them for recovery and reopening as well as addressing recruitment gaps if these emerge.
6. Schools may have been used for other purposes and may need refurbishing and require new supplies of books and equipment. Reopening will need to be planned and prepared for with health and wellbeing ensured.
7. The closure of schools, even with mitigation measures, will result in slower learning progress. The poorest are likely to fall further behind their richer peers. When schools reopen, large-scale assessment can identify learning gaps and inform remedial programming and learning opportunities so that all children catch up to grade level rapidly.

Appendix 1 gives an overview of the three stages of planning, mitigation, and recovery, the types of interventions that are necessary in each, and associated time horizons.

Proposal to support mitigation and recovery: COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window

GPE is already providing countries with immediate support for contingency and response planning through a multi-country education sector plan development grant (ESPDG) managed by UNICEF. GPE is also looking at other existing GPE programs and how they can be rapidly adapted to support the response. Education sector program implementation grants (ESPIGs) could be restructured to adapt to changing needs in the education system because of the COVID-19 crisis. Regional hubs for the GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) funding window could support the COVID-19 response through identifying and sharing good practice in mitigation actions related to continuity of learning and in recovery and reopening schools. The Secretariat will explore how KIX supplemental funding could be used to support COVID-19 related research and knowledge activities through regional hubs. GPE's Education Out Loud (EOL) funding window is looking at how to use CSOs to support vital accountability and support work to mitigate the secondary education impacts of COVID-19 through social mobilization, outreach, awareness raising, monitoring at community level. There may be scope to provide overall coordination through EOL on monitoring approaches and advocacy that amplify the key messages already issued by [UNICEF, IFRC and WHO](#).

However, the financial needs generated by COVID-19 are expected to be large and responses must be mobilized quickly in order to have effect in protecting development gains. To support government-led efforts at the necessary scale and speed, the Secretariat proposes to create a dedicated funding window focused on COVID-19 response and early recovery, through the creation of an additional window under the Accelerated Funding mechanism. A large part of the focus would be on preparedness for reopening schools but mitigation measures during school closing would be addressed as far as possible, based on contexts and specific needs. An initial GPE allocation of US\$250 million could be made available utilizing GPE's existing cash balance. The provision of these funds takes into account the likelihood of a slowdown in regular ESPIG/Multiplier programming in 2020. This means that more disbursements for regular activities are likely to be deferred into 2021 and therefore could be financed from the next financing campaign, assuming that there is not a material reduction in planned donor contributions over the next 12 months. US\$25 million of this initial US\$250 million would be made available for global or regional responses, such as seeking efficiencies in procurement; same language radio programming; collaborating on guidance and messaging; lesson learning and developing/scaling up effective approaches. There would not be sufficient funds available from GPE alone to guarantee allocations for all countries and therefore targeted contributions from donors, private foundations and the private sector would be sought to increase the availability of funds.

Accelerated funding helps enable countries to address urgent needs, including for early recovery. Key principles of the mechanism are collaboration between the government, the LEG, and the education cluster, as well as a quicker process for the development, review and approval of applications. As this global public health crisis is new and related needs are rapidly evolving, a modified approach to the mechanism is proposed. For this a COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window would be created, with the following characteristics:

- *The mechanism would be demand-driven with allocations made based on a first-come, first-served approach to incentivize a timely response.*
 - *The Secretariat will work with partner governments and eligible Grant Agents to identify those that may need the most assistance in formulating a response and application to ensure that there is a balance in providing support between those that are most in need with those that can respond and access the funds quickest. GPE is already supporting governments in preparing response activities through the multi-country ESPDG with UNICEF as Grant Agent.*
- *Eligibility for grants is proposed to be 67 ESPIG-eligible countries, linked to the 2018-2020 GPE eligibility list. These countries are listed in Table 1. Should the Board want to expand eligibility to include an additional 20 countries that are eligible for ESPDG support but not for ESPIGs, this is possible and those countries and the related financial implications are identified in Table 1 of this document.*
- *The allocation size per country reflects school-age population bands, as outlined in Table 1, with a minimum of US\$1 million and a maximum of US\$20 million.*
- *In order to ensure speedy response to proposals:*
 - *The CEO would be delegated authority to approve proposals. The Coordinating Committee would review the use of the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window every three months.*
 - *At the country level only interested grant agents that are pre-accredited and have the capacity to act would be eligible for selection by the government (this is standard with Accelerated Funding). A waiver would be sought so that accredited INGOs would not require a formal country-level grant assessment if the allocation is more than US\$5 million. However, risk would still be considered by the Secretariat.*
 - *Regional and multi-country approaches would be encouraged for efficiency, such as in the case of small islands or clusters of countries with the same grant agent.*

- *A portion of funds would be used to support the development, dissemination and delivery at scale of new and existing global and regional learning continuity approaches in the 67 ESPIG eligible (or 87 ESPDG eligible) countries. This is in addition to exploring how KIX and EOL can be adapted to support the response. Some continuity of learning approaches can be developed and disseminated more efficiently and rapidly at a regional level, taking advantage of common languages and economies of scale.*
 - *A pre-selected consortium of accredited GPE grant agents would manage the funding based on their capacity to respond to country needs and regional needs at the global level. Interested grant agents would be invited to apply as a consortium to manage the multi-country grant.*
 - *The consortium would act to quality-assure a range of existing products that can support continuity of learning and psycho-social support; provide advice on how to use these products at scale so that continuity-of-learning approaches are fully inclusive and use a range of channels and wrap-around resources.*
 - *There would be provision of funds to scale up delivery of learning continuity approaches with a focus on how to reach the poorest and most marginalized and sharing best practice on how to do this rapidly using the best evidence.*
 - *The fund would look to economies of scale in the development/adaptation of approaches, and procurement of goods and services where this is appropriate. For example, where there are common languages and curricula or where media providers can provide a regional response.*
 - *Provide funds to develop, procure and distribute supplementary resources that are necessary for continuity of learning; e.g. basic supplies, adapted workbooks and existing textbooks.*
 - *Consider how to utilize teachers most effectively where they are not drafted into the health response to support students remotely.*
- *GPE will endeavor to minimize transaction costs. The consortium approach for learning continuity will reduce transaction costs as will using pre-approved Grant Agents and their own processes. Using GPE's delegated authority will also reduce workload for committees and speed up the processes for approvals.*

The funding approach is outlined below:

Stage	GPE Funding mechanism	Eligibility	Type of grant	Grant Agent	Amount from GPE	Approval
Planning 0-12 months	ESPDG (already approved)	87 countries	Multi-country	UNICEF	8.19M	Secretariat
Mitigation and Recovery Next 18 months	COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window	67 ESPIG-eligible countries	Per country	Selected by government	225M	Secretariat
	COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window: Multi-country grant	67 ESPIG-eligible countries	Multi-country learning continuity approaches	Pre-selected consortium of GAs	25M	Secretariat

Timeline for implementation:

- Consortium of GAs chosen for continuity of learning approaches (April)
- Implementation of continuity of learning component (May onwards)
- Applications from countries (April-September)
- Implementation of mitigation/recovery support (May-June and onwards)

Secretariat capacity: The Secretariat would handle the additional applications using existing staff, redeploying where necessary to allow surge support to reviewing and processing country applications.

Coordination with partners (e.g. World Bank, UNICEF, ECW): Governments and partners are already mobilizing around the development of response plans, including with GPE's ESPDG funding, which will also help interventions to be coordinated. ECW has estimated that the 26 countries currently receiving support from ECW will require at least US\$35-40 million over the next 3-4 months to support Education in Emergencies activities in response to COVID-19. The risk of duplication with GPE's support is low, firstly because GPE's support is targeted at system-level mitigation and recovery, and secondly because partners expect financial needs to be high.

Table 1. Country Allocation Amounts Linked to School Aged Population (Non ESPIG eligible countries are in Red)

Suggested Option - 67 ESPIG Eligible (Excludes Syria for operational reasons), or
[Alternative Option - 87 ESPDG Eligible Countries (Excludes Syria and West Bank & Gaza for operational reasons)]

Note: All 67 countries would be eligible to apply for funding from the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window, including ones that have an existing Accelerated Funding allocation as a result of the Board decision in December 2019. The funding for COVID-19 mitigation and recovery has a different purpose and focus than country-level humanitarian appeals. An example of how this would work is the following: Bangladesh is currently already eligible for Accelerated Funding and is planning to use these funds to support education for Rohingya. Funding from the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window could support COVID-19 mitigation and recovery in Bangladesh across the country, while safeguarding the previously planned support for Rohingya children.

Maximum Allocation	Country
Up to US\$20 million	Bangladesh, DR Congo, Egypt , Ethiopia, India , Indonesia , Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines , Uganda, Tanzania, Vietnam
Up to US\$15 million	Afghanistan, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco , Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Sudan, Yemen
Up to US\$10 million	Bolivia , Burundi, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Rep, El Salvador , Eritrea, Guatemala , Guinea, Haiti, Honduras , Lao PDR, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Somalia, Sri Lanka , Tajikistan , Togo, Tunisia , Ukraine , Uzbekistan , Zambia, Zimbabwe
Up to US\$5 million	Armenia , Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kyrgyz Republic , Lesotho, Mauritania, Moldova , Mongolia , Eswatini , Timor-Leste
Up to US\$1 million	Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Dominica, Grenada, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Total Potential Financial Need

Suggested Option - \$612 million + \$25 million in public goods (39% funding coverage by GPE)

Alternative Option - \$842 million + \$25 million in public goods (29% funding coverage by GPE)

Appendix 1. Detailed overview of planning, mitigation, and recovery interventions

Timeline for implementation	GPE response
<p>Immediate (0-12 months, depending on country needs)</p>	<p>Supporting contingency and response planning (ESPDG – already approved)</p> <p><u>Country level</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support risk analysis and response planning, including data collection and monitoring (at national, subnational and school levels) 2. Implement safe school operations and risk communication <p><u>Country, regional, and global levels</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Knowledge exchange and capacity building
<p>Next 6 months</p>	<p>Supporting government-led mitigation efforts</p> <p><u>Country level</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where schools have not yet closed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support preparedness to keep schools and children safe - Plan for school closure, continuity of learning programs and psycho-social support - Plan and design for monitoring equity and learning during continuity programming - Prepare logistics, procurement and delivery of continuity programs 2. Where schools have closed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support continuity of learning at scale and planning for remedial learning and recovery - Using assessment to track progress - Identifying and addressing specific poverty and gender barriers to continuity of learning - Protecting the education workforce and use and include teachers in continuity programs <p><u>Regional/global levels</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Support the best use of existing approaches, takes these to scale and, if needed, the development and scale up of learning continuity approaches, monitoring the education impact of the crisis on children, teachers and learning
<p>3-18 months (June/July and onwards, or as soon as countries are able to re-open schools)</p>	<p>Supporting government-led recovery efforts in a medium-term</p> <p><u>Country level</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparing the system, teachers and reopening schools after long closures and difficult circumstances and supporting education financing 2. Close the gap in learning through remedial and accelerated learning programmes and certification of learning 3. Addressing specific poverty and gender barriers to returning to school, e.g. conditional cash transfers 4. Using regional and global approaches where these are appropriate and bring economies of scale <p>(If schools remain closed: Mitigation activities remain relevant)</p>