SYRIA MAXIMUM COUNTRY ALLOCATION

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: Grants and Performance Committee (GPC)

Committee Consideration:

- The GPC reviewed three options for GPE’s engagement in Syria during a call late September and provided helpful comments on framing the options and further information/clarifications needed for the Board. GPC members expressed a strong divergence of views on the options in representing their various constituencies. The Committee concluded that the Board should consider all three options, taking into account the implications, sensitivities and precedent setting by any decision.

- However, cognizant that previous Board papers on the Syria MCA without a recommendation had resulted in non-decisions from the Board with the GPC discussing the same issue anew, the Chair stated a preference that in the final Board paper the GPC provide some steer to the Board on the choice of options based on comments made throughout the process of finalizing the Board paper. Option 1 as discussed during the call, to follow GPE’s usual process, was opposed by some constituencies represented who found any (perceived) direct contact with the Syrian government unacceptable. Option 3, cancelling the MCA for Syria, was opposed by other constituencies represented who cited, based on the Secretariat’s analysis, that there is no legal restriction to GPE engagement in Syria. With no comments declaring opposition to Option 2 in principle and several indications of support, the Chair concluded that at this point this may be a signal that the Board may be able to build consensus for Option 2, which proposes working through the Syrian Education Dialogue Forum in this exceptional case.


1. OBJECTIVE

1.1. The Board is to consider whether and how GPE should implement the US$25 million maximum country allocation for Syria. Three options, discussed below, are proposed by the Grants and Performance Committee based on their deliberations and consultations with constituencies.
2. RECOMMENDED DECISION

BOD/2019/12-XX—Syria Maximum Country Allocation: The Board of Directors:

1. Agrees to Option (1, 2 or 3) as set out in BOD/2019/12 DOC 11 for GPE engagement/non-engagement in Syria.

2. [If the Board chooses Option 2] On an exceptional basis, waives the DCP membership precondition for grant funding for education needs in Syria on the condition that funding be deployed under applicable UN resolutions and mechanisms and in accordance with GPE Operating Principles in Complex Emergencies. The Board invites accredited grant agents authorized to operate on Syrian territory under the applicable UN resolutions to submit an expression of interest by January 15, 2020 to serve as grant agent including potential scope of work.

3. [If the Board chooses Option 3] Requests the Finance and Risk Committee to develop a proposal for reallocating the US$25 million maximum country allocation.

2. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

2.1. In February 2018, the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) approved an MCA of US$25 million to meet education needs in Syria based on its delegated authority and Board-approved eligibility criteria and allocation formula. The Syrian Education Dialogue Forum (EDF), which convenes development and humanitarian actors supporting education in Syria, submitted a proposal for use of the funds (see Annex E for needs and coordination mechanisms in Syria.) Subsequent GPC, Coordinating Committee (CC) and Board discussions are summarized in Annex C.

2.2. In June 2019, the Board requested the GPC to develop a paper for the December 2019 Board meeting describing the special considerations, challenges, risks and possible framework for engagement in Syria considering GPE’s mandate, operating framework in emergencies, and legal parameters. The Secretariat, at the GPC’s request in July, consulted with World Bank legal counsel and the relevant UN authorities on potential support from GPE to education in Syria (see Annex B.) The CC, in its September 10 call, requested that the paper also address the pros, cons, and risks of providing funding for education in Syria, which are detailed in Annex A. Potential GPE-ECW complementarity is detailed in Annex F and GPE’s mandate in Complex Emergencies in Annex E.

2.3 The GPC presents the following options to the Board:

Option 1: In line with GPE’s standard operating model, invite the Syrian government through the Ministry of Education to join GPE by committing to the Compact, mobilizing a local education
group and developing and adopting an endorsed education sector plan. The grant application process would follow standard procedure. The Secretariat recommends that the GPC approve the grant agent and project scope early in the process.

Option 2: The Board invites accredited grant agents authorized to operate on Syrian territory under the applicable UN resolutions to submit an expression of interest to serve as grant agent including potential scope of work. Based on the expressions of interest, the Secretariat would make a recommendation on which grant agent to select and scope of work. When preparing this proposal, the Secretariat will consult with EDF. To increase efficiency, the Board delegates its authority to approve the proposed grant agent as well as scope of work to the GPC. Based on the selection, the grant agent will be requested to prepare a proposal, in consultation with EDF. Like any local education group (LEG), the EDF\(^1\) would be an advisory entity only. Any resulting grant proposal would require the approval of the Board before funds would be allocated, and the selected grant agent would need to guarantee that its proposal meets legal requirements to operate within Syria based on UN resolutions in addition to GPE requirements for grant agents. This option requires an exemption from country membership and funding model requirements. Syria would not become a member of GPE and the Secretariat would not have contact with the Syrian government.

Option 3: Cancel the MCA for Syria and ask the FRC to propose how to reallocate the MCA.

Annexes (posted on the Board meeting registration site)

Annex A: Details of the Options
Annex B: Legal Considerations
Annex C: Background on Syria MCA
Annex D: GPE’s Mandate in Complex Emergencies
Annex E: Education Needs, Support and Coordination in Syria
Annex F: Potential GPE-ECW Complementarity in Syria
Annex G: Indicative timeline in the event of engagement

\(^1\) The EDF is the most comprehensive education coordination mechanism for Syria and as such, the closest to a Local Education Group (LEG). The Whole of Syria (WoS) is the UN response framework in the country, and as such WoS education partners are part of the EDF, alongside donors and regional UN representatives.