June 5, 2020

H.E. Dr. Didacus Jules
Director General
Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
Castries
Saint Lucia

Approval of COVID-19 Accelerated Funding to Support the Education Sector in the Member States of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

Excellency,

On behalf of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), I am pleased to inform you that with the delegated authority from the GPE Board of Directors, I have approved the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States’s regional application for a COVID-19 accelerated funding request in the amount of US$ 3,000,000 on behalf of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I have also approved a 7% agency fees for the grant agent, OECS Commission, in the amount of US$ 210,000.

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

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Talia de Chaisemartin, Country Lead for the Eastern Caribbean Member States.

We look forward to working with you closely to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of the children in the Eastern Caribbean.

Sincerely,

Alice P. Albright
Chief Executive Officer
Global Partnership for Education
cc:
Dr. Jeffrey Blaize, GPE Focal Point, Assistant Chief Education Officer, Dominica
Mr. Kevin Andall Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development & Religious Affairs, GPE Focal Point, Grenada
Mr. Dawson Ragunanan, GPE Focal Point, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Saint Lucia
Mr. Dixton Findlay, GPE Focal Point, Senior Education Officer, Research & Development, Ministry of Education, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Dr. Martin Baptiste, Coordinating Agency, Senior Operations Officer- Education, Caribbean Development Bank
Mr. Marcellus Albertin, Head, Education Development Management Unit, OECS Commission
Mr. Sven Baeten, Acting Country Support Team Manager, GPE Secretariat
Mr. Nilse Ryman, Regional Manager, GPE Secretariat
Ms. Talia de Chaisemartin, Country Lead and Senior Education Specialist, GPE Secretariat
Annex – DECISION LANGUAGE

In line with the delegated authority granted by the Board of Directors, the GPE CEO approves the COVID-19 accelerated funding request for Caribbean countries (Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) in the amount of US$ 3,000,000 plus an additional US$ 210,000 in agency fees to OECS as Grant Agent. The grant has a start date of June 5, 2020 and an end date of September 30, 2021.

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

The GPE Board approved the COVID-19 funding mechanism on a first come, first served approach for the first US$ 125 million of the original US$ 225 million COVID-19 country funding window. Although the remaining US$ 100 million has been subsequently significantly increased to US$ 350 million by the Board, the demand for the COVID-19 funding mechanism still exceeds the available funds and the maximum allocation for Caribbean is now $US 3 million, lower than the initial allocation and requested amount of US$ 4 million.

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

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

Request for Report-Back

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

2. The Secretariat recognizes the relevance of the activity supporting online learning given context and equity focus. The Grant Agent is requested to elaborate on the risks around the devices and safeguards that will be put in place to protect the investment. This information should be provided to the Secretariat prior to procuring the devices. The Secretariat understands that the safeguards should be balanced with the need for devices to be delivered to children.
3. As evidenced in the Ebola epidemic, mass school closure can come with an increased risk to girls (e.g., increased incidence of GBV, early pregnancy) and, during the return to school phase, girls may face specific barriers to re-entering school and learning recovery. Please identify the extent to which gender-specific vulnerabilities and barriers to learning will be addressed in the program.

4. The Grant Agent is requested to make the following amendments to the results framework: Indicators 2,3 under activity 1.1; Indicator 2 under activity 2.6; Indicators 1,2 under activity 3.1 should also be reported as the % of the relevant beneficiary population reached/% of schools in the program area.

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

**Observations**

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

b) We suggest that activities with clear and immediate impact on the continuation and safeguarding of education for vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 crisis be prioritized over activities that provide lesser immediate value for money for this purpose.

c) The Secretariat particularly recognizes the importance of the following activities: the Academic Recovery Programme, providing hygiene kits to students, and providing WASH support to vulnerable schools.

d) An appropriate reduction is suggested in implementation support costs given the lower overall budget.

**Reporting**

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

**Reprogramming**

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