

CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE 9/10/2024

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO	
FROM: Marco Mantovanelli, Kirsten Majgaard, Sven Baeten, Matthew Smith, Jo Bourne	
SUBJECT: Approval of a system transformation grant for Solomon Islands	
Country: Solomon Islands	
System transformation grant allocation	US\$5,000,000
Allocation requested (100%)	US\$5,000,000
Allocation recommended by Secretariat	US\$5,000,000
Results based financing	No
Grant agent	UNICEF
Agency fee (% and amount)	7% US\$350,000
Period	5 years and 2 months
Expected start date	11/1//2024
Closing date	12/31/2029
Funding source	GPE Fund

Action Request

Approve an allocation from GPE trust funds for a system transformation grant (STG), in support of the Education Transformation Program for the Solomon Islands, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table above.

The exceptional approval of the grant duration, which goes beyond the standard four-year period, should be noted. The Solomon Islands underlined the necessity for the flexibility given the unique challenges expected with logistics and implementation. The Secretariat, interpreting this as not a major deviation from GPE policy, approves of this exception but strongly recommends that the government and its partners offload the majority of grant disbursement over the first four years.

Grant Summary

Solomon Islands partnership compact priority reform for system transformation is to strengthen and reform the foundations for improving quality teaching and learning, incorporating a gender equality and inclusion lens. The compact identified four key components that are integral to improving the education transformation system in the Solomon Islands, namely, teacher management system, school leadership and management, teacher professional learning and development, and Curriculum (learning framework), student assessment, teaching, and learning resources.

The system transformation grant will specifically support two components, components 3 and 4 of the partnership compact. New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade committed to support components 1 and 2 of the partnership compact. STG funding will be used to

implement the component 3 of the partnership compact: teacher professional development. The proposed activities for component 3 hold the potential to transform the education system in the Solomon Islands significantly by providing professional development opportunities to teachers who have not received any nationwide Professional Development activities in this century despite the release of the National Curriculum Statement in 2012, the program is set to make a substantial impact. A gender and inclusion lens will be integrated into the teacher professional development program, attention has also been given to strategies to tackle school-related gender-based violence. The STG will also support component 4: curriculum (Learning Framework) and teaching and learning resources. Component 4 will support content development of the iResource Platform which will allow schools and teachers to access effective teaching and learning materials online. Access to the teaching and learning materials through the iResource Platform will transform the way how teachers and schools have access to necessary curriculum and teaching and learning materials, which is the foundation for improving learning outcomes.

Current Portfolio

Solomon Islands' allocation (US\$2.5 million) for its Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) is pooled into the regional ESPIG (US\$15 million) which is implementing the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) Program Phase 1 that supports 15 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) including the Solomon Islands. Solomon Islands GPE System Capacity Grant (SCG) has been implemented since February 2024 with a strong linkage to the activities that this STG Program Document proposes.

Enabling Factors Assessment

The Solomon Islands identified data and evidence as its only high priority, while the other enabling factors were labeled medium priorities. This was due to the lack of recent data and reporting to inform education policy in the country. In its partnership compact, the government and partners expressed their aim to improve data collection and teacher access to data to enhance teaching approaches across all levels. The enabling factors analysis also underlined that teachers "lack programmatic support to address issues related to data and evidence in their daily work at different levels, access to quality data and methodologies to analyze data and generate quality evidence." As such, through the activities of the STG, namely the content development for the iResource platform, the country is strengthening personnel and financing for the generation of data and evidence at the school level. The Education Transformation Program is aligned that objective and the overarching priority reform and aims to address the country's education challenges as well as those outlined in the partnership compact.

Significant Opportunities:

The country is commended for its concentrated focus on supporting teachers, especially through the STG. As key components of the education system, a focus on teachers targets reinforcing the foundation of education for learners in the country by equipping them (the teachers) with effective literacy, numeracy, and learner-centered teaching strategies,

supporting them in using assessments for learning, and strengthening implementation of the new curriculum.

Moreover, empowering teachers and schools has a significant meaning for the Solomon Islands. With the new Education Act enforced last year, teachers and schools are expected to lead education in a new decentralized governance system, rather than just to follow instructions from the government as was done in the past. This is a transformative paradigm shift in this country's context, and supporting teachers and schools should be seen from this progressive lens.

Significant Issues and Risks

The Secretariat notes that the program would start November 30, 2024, and end December 31, 2029, which is beyond the standard four-year period. For justification, the country cites the highly ambitious transformation agenda, the difficulties and challenges it faces logistically in reaching all the provinces and even following up for monitoring and progress checks. Thus, the poor local infrastructure and other environmental conditions, including climate-related adversities, require the lengthy duration, and may also be a factor in possible implementation delays.

Recommendation

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that the **RM recommends the CEO the approval of an allocation of US\$5,000,000 for Solomon Islands with UNICEF as Grant Agent.**

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: System Transformation Grant

Country: Solomon Islands

CEO/2024/10-09-2024

The CEO in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors approves the System Transformation Grant request for Solomon Islands in the amount of US\$5,000,000 plus an additional US\$350,000 in agency fees to UNICEF as the grant agent, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table above, subject to:

- a) Availability of funds.
- b) Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for grants in annual installments.

Date: September 10, 2024



Laura Frigenti, CEO