

CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE 11/04/2024

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO	
SUBJECT: Approval of a system transformation grant for Fiji	
Country	Fiji
System transformation grant allocation	US\$5,000,000
Allocation requested (XX%)	US\$ 4,999,980
Allocation recommended by Secretariat	US\$ 4,999,980
Results based financing	No
Grant agent	UNICEF
Agency fee (% and amount)	7% US\$ 349,998.60
Period	3 Years
Expected start date	3/17/2025
Closing date	3/16/2029
Funding source	GPE Fund

Action request

Approve an allocation from GPE trust funds for a system transformation grant, in support of the Fiji System Transformation program, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table above.

Grant Summary

The Fiji Partnership Compact's priority reform for system transformation focuses on strengthening system-wide collaboration to enhance teaching quality, ultimately improving learning outcomes. The Compact has identified four key areas essential to transforming Fiji's education system: (1) Enhanced and coordinated teacher professional development and support systems; (2) Strengthened coherence in teaching and curriculum application by teachers and school managers; (3) Improved school readiness through collaborative support for Early Childhood Education (ECE), easing transitions to primary education; and (4) Collaboration to transform teaching and learning practices, promoting values such as mutual respect, gender equality, and inclusion.

The System Transformation Grant (STG) aims to provide all learners aged 5 to 8, including those with special education needs, with high-quality early childhood and early grade education in an inclusive, supportive, and well-resourced environment. Fiji's strategy to achieve this is based on three key pillars:

1. Teaching and Learning: This pillar aims to improve learning outcomes for children aged 5 to 8 by enhancing teaching quality in the one year of pre-primary and the first three years of primary education. The goal is to develop competent, motivated teachers who

deliver high-quality, inclusive, and gender-responsive teaching, supported by peers, school leaders, and collaboration with parents.

2. **System Capacity:** The second pillar focuses on strengthening the capacity of key actors and structures that support schools and teachers in delivering ECE. This includes empowering entities responsible for governing the ECE sector and ensuring they can effectively train, support, and supervise teachers and schools, thereby promoting strong leadership and management within the ECE sector.
3. **System Framework:** The third pillar ensures that teachers, school leaders, district and divisional officers, Teacher Training Institution (TTI) staff, and ministry personnel in Fiji are guided by a comprehensive framework for the effective organization and delivery of ECE. This framework includes the ECE policy, curriculum, and a set of quality standards, providing all stakeholders with clear guidelines for delivering effective early childhood education.

Current Portfolio

GPE's current portfolio in Fiji includes a System Capacity Grant (SCG: \$587,879) to undertake an Education Sector Analysis and development a new Education Sector plan. Fiji has since successfully applied for further funding (\$793,285) under the SCG to respond to areas identified in their Enabling Factor Analysis and their Education Partnership. This work includes strengthening policy and planning functions, FEMIS mapping and data training, a Joint Sector Review and sector coordination and a legislative review. Fiji also has an active Program Development Grant (\$199,830) that is supporting the development of the Systems Transformation Grant application program of work and budget. Fiji has been supported in accessing GPE funds through their Education Partners Group (EPG) with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) acting as Coordinating Agency. UNICEF is a grant agent for both current grants.

Enabling Factors Assessment

Data and evidence and planning were identified as high priorities under the enabling factors assessment; and the SCG allocation was accessed to help address the issues related to data and policy planning. The STG program was developed with sound evaluations from the enabling factors analysis and the latest education sector analysis.

The STG program is intended to build on the work started with the SCG and successful implementation will rely on quality data and information to guide the government and partners on the structural improvements intended for the education system. The program's efforts to harness data on teachers and ECE learning aims to assure accurate statistics are by and large being leveraged to inform sector planning and policy.

Significant Opportunities:

The Secretariat commends the Government of Fiji and its partners on this strong program as well as the commitment expressed to execute it. The program aims to address longstanding and serious bottlenecks the Fijian education has been experiencing, which includes poor learning outcomes and weak teacher training and development programs. Based on the education sector analysis, the government and partners identified a serious disconnect between the pre-primary ECE and early grade primary education. The program's focus on reinforcing ECE learning presents an opportunity to improve the transition from pre-primary to primary, and to higher grades by setting all students up with a strong foundation for further learning. The Secretariat also welcomes the improved collaboration between the ministry and teacher training institutes, which is expected to be a result of the renewed focus on teachers.

Moreover, the program will address improved inclusion of children with disabilities, something that has remained a challenge for many years. The government regards these as the fundamental areas to be addressed that would impact and support other reforms envisaged by their plans for a reinforced education system that ensures better learning outcomes and longer-term prospects for the nation's children.

The program integrates gender equity and inclusion across all components, including the development of gender transformative pedagogy as a "major outcome". The program commits to including activities to respond to the Partnership Compact's commitment to "address violence, discrimination, and harassment based on gender or disability". As key activities will undergo a next phase of design, we will look forward to how this objective is operationalized and reported on to gain an understanding of the roles teachers and learning communities can play in responding to violence, bullying and discrimination, including gender-based violence.

Significant Issues and Risks:

The program document lays out a number of risk factors that may hinder implementation. Many of the risk factors are tied to human resources and the capacities of teachers and school administrations. Firstly, the teaching profession, notably at the pre-primary ECE level, has not been an attractive career option, and the lack of resources for teacher support and development has been a deterrent. The government is conscious of this and plans to harness the revamped teacher training initiatives as an incentive to attract more individuals to the profession. Moreover, the government has also been conscious of limited capacity of heads of schools and district offices and the potential heavy workload that the program may impose on them. As with the teacher trainings, the government remains confident that the proposed targeted and relevant professional development initiatives will be motivating factors and help ease teacher workloads as they become better equipped and prepared over the duration of the program. Solid results and sustainability rely on the system's capacity and human resources to roll out and effectively deliver the revised ECE curricula and learning materials.

Recommendation

The Review Meeting (RM) concluded, based on the Secretariat's quality assurance review, that the **RM recommends to the CEO the approval of an allocation of US\$4,999,980 for Fiji with UNICEF as Grant Agent.**]

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: System Transformation Grant

Country: Fiji

CEO/2024/04-11-2024

The CEO in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors approves the System Transformation Grant request for Fiji in the amount of US\$4,999,980 plus an additional US\$349,998.60 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: November 4, 2024



Laura Frigenti, CEO