

CEO DECISION MEMO

DATE 01/08/2025

TO: Laura Frigenti, CEO	
SUBJECT: Approval of a system transformation grant for Kiribati	
Country: Kiribati	
System transformation grant allocation	US\$2,500,000
Allocation requested (XX%)	US\$2,499,993
Allocation recommended by Secretariat	US\$2,499,993
Results based financing	No
Grant agent	UNESCO
Agency fee (% and amount)	US\$174,999.51 (7%)
Period	4 years
Expected start date	4/1/2025
Closing date	3/31/2029
Funding source	GPE Fund

Action request

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

Grant Summary

The Kiribati System Transformation Grant (STG) is designed to address critical challenges within Kiribati's education system, identified through in-depth consultations and outlined in the partnership compact. These challenges include insufficient infrastructure, limited resources, and high dropout rates, particularly affecting boys. The STG is designed to expand access to quality education and enhance teaching practices, with a strong emphasis on leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to drive educational outcomes. The program aligns with the Kiribati Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2024-2027 and the ICT in Education Master Plan (2021-2025), reflecting a cohesive approach to long-term educational reform. A key element of the STG involves establishing model schools that will serve as pilot sites for testing and refining ICT infrastructure and innovative teaching methodologies. These model schools will act as hubs for evidence-based learning, enabling Kiribati to systematically adapt and scale successful practices. Through ICT integration, the STG seeks to support student learning directly by broadening access to digital resources, such as inclusive digital lesson plans, interactive projectable diagrams, and digital tools for student assessments. The STG program is organized around three interconnected components including: **Access:** Expanding access to quality learning through ICT infrastructure and inclusive pedagogies. **Teaching Quality:** Improving teaching quality and inclusion through access to digital resources and training on using ICTs. **Systems Reform:** Strengthening the

collection and use of data to support programme implementation, inclusivity, and system improvements.

Current Portfolio

Kiribati's 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 Kiribati. GPE's current portfolio in Kiribati also includes i) a Program Development Grant (PDG: \$200,000) with Asian Development Bank (ADB) as grant agent supporting the development of the Multiplier, ii) another Program Development Grant (\$200,000) with UNESCO as grant agent that is supporting the development of System Transformation grant, and iii) a System Capacity Grant (SCG: \$1,000,000) with UNICEF as grant agent.

Enabling Factors Assessment:

Data and evidence is the only factor identified as a high priority in its enabling factors analysis. There have been significant limitations faced with gathering and producing up-to-date data, which underlines a need for an improved system to support effective policy and decision making. The program outlines a focus on access, teacher quality, and system reform—the very latter of which is intended to update the data and information management system to not only monitor learning and schools but also track resource allocation and provide the government with a better platform for responding to education challenges.

Significant Opportunities:

In its partnership compact, Kiribati determined that removing barriers to access and promoting equitable and inclusive education was their priority reform. The STG program focus on the use of ICT and digital tools aims to set the country up to achieve that by improving access, learning, and teacher quality. The program outcomes and activities target students who may be underserved (socio-economically and those with disabilities) and/or living in remote areas given the numerous atolls that make up the country and the fact that some of them are far less populated than others. This is the government's attempt at extending access to all children and also equipping teachers and school administrators on ICT to be able to maintain the ICT-supported system and ensure continuous improvement.

The program showcases an aim to address persistent challenges the education system has been facing, including the shortage of adequately trained teachers, and high drop-out rates, particularly for male students, as well as limited access to educational resources especially for communities in remote areas. To address some of these issues, the program intends to improve teacher quality and capacity through training as well as address student to teacher ratios to alleviate some of the burden on teachers, especially those in rural, less connected areas. The program also intends to support a more relevant curriculum, and refine newly developed ICT courses, enhancing course content to promote gender-responsive teaching tackling challenges by boys and girls. The plan is for a staggered rollout of the program to start

in more populated areas and then to the rural areas to be able to learn and adapt and be prepared before further expansion.

Significant Issues and Risks:

The program acknowledges that Kiribati's status as a small island nation and its vulnerability to climate-related disasters and adversities pose great unpredictability throughout the program implementation. The country has identified risks related to its geography and history with natural disasters that could not only hamper implementation but damage some of the ICT infrastructure and equipment. The country is also integrating the findings of the ongoing gender analysis as they become available.

Moreover, the country also said that maintaining the ICT systems may present a challenge as each school may lack the technical expertise to provide upkeep. The situation is even more precarious in more remote areas. The Secretariat also noted a possible risk with the lack of trained and qualified teachers, (mentioned above) which if not addressed, could jeopardize the roll-out of the ICT-supported learning, especially if there isn't adequate teaching available for areas and populations that have been difficult to reach.

The government outlined mitigation measures to address these risks, including procuring climate-resistant equipment, providing regular training to school staff and teachers to be able to maintain and upgrade technology when needed, as well as outlining system-wide contingency plans to deal with operational uncertainties in the face of disasters or emergencies.

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\$2,499,993 for Kiribati with UNESCO as Grant Agent.**

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Grant: System Transformation Grant

Country: Kiribati

CEO/2025/01-08-2025

The CEO in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors approves the System Transformation Grant request for Kiribati in the amount of US\$2,499,993 plus an additional US\$174,999.51 in agency fees to UNESCO 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: January 8, 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Frigenti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

Laura Frigenti, CEO

The CEO Decision Memo should not exceed 3 pages.