



Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 29-Jun-2020 | Report No: PIDA29566



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Benin	Project ID P174186	Project Name Benin COVID-19 Education Response GPE Project	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region AFRICA WEST	Estimated Appraisal Date 08-Jul-2020	Estimated Board Date 26-Aug-2020	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Economy and Finance	Implementing Agency Ministry of Pre and Primary Schools	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The proposed project's development objectives are to: (a) ensure continuity of teaching during and after the COVID - 19 pandemic, particularly in deprived communes in the Recipient's territory; and (b) increase the Government's preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises

Components

- Component 1: Ensuring safe reopening of schools and return of students, especially in deprived communes
- Component 2: Improving preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises
- Component 3: Ensuring monitoring, management and coordination of the project

The processing of this project is applying the policy requirements exceptions for situations of urgent need of assistance or capacity constraints that are outlined in OP 10.00, paragraph 12.

Yes

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	6.85
Total Financing	6.85
of which IBRD/IDA	0.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS



Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	6.85
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative	6.85

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

1. **School closures due to COVID-19 will negatively impact education outcomes in Benin and affect its Human capital index.** The first confirmed COVID-19 case in Benin was announced on March 16, 2020¹. Specific measures have been taken by the Government of Benin (GoB) to manage the COVID-19 outbreak, including school closures from March 27 to May 10, 2020. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Benin was facing a learning crisis and considerable geographic and social disparities in the provision and quality of education services. The Human Capital Index (HCI) scores, which measures the productivity of people given their health and education, is currently 41 percent for Benin². This ranks Benin at 125th out of 157 countries worldwide and 14th of 39 Sub-Saharan countries included in the HCI survey. School closures will further deteriorate education outcomes for children if actions are not urgently implemented. Immediate action is therefore required to ensure continuity of teaching and during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. **The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has approved a US\$ 7 million³ to Benin on June 17, 2020, from the GPE COVID-19 accelerated funding window.** This accelerated funding window is designed to provide governments with the financing and technical resources required to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on their education systems and to support recovery efforts in their country.

Country Context

¹ As of June 3, 2020, Benin reported 261 cases of COVID-19. Of the confirmed cases, 109 cases are still active, 148 cases recovered (and patients have since been dispatched), and 4 cases have resulted in death.

² This means that a child born today will only be 41 percent as productive as she/he could be if she/he enjoyed complete education and full health

³ This amount includes the Bank supervision cost.



3. **Benin is a small West-African coastal country with a predominantly young, and rapidly growing, population.** Estimated at 11.80 million in 2019, up from the 2013 census population of 9.98 million, the population is growing at a rapid rate of approximately 3 percent per year⁴. The population is young, with a median age of 18.2 years. With about 42.5 percent of the population under the age of 15, Benin ranks among the top 25 countries worldwide in terms of the largest percentage of young people⁵. This proportion rises to 63 percent for those under the age of 25. The labor market is also under extreme pressure as approximately 200,000 young people reach working age each year⁶.

4. **Despite Benin being one of the fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), with growth averaging 6.3 percent in 2017-2019, the poverty rate remains high at 45.4 percent in 2019 (US\$1.9 a day threshold, 2011 PPP).** Growth in recent years has mainly been driven by booming cotton production, and strong construction and port activity following a series of reforms that improved port management and facilitated trade. An important feature of Benin's economy is the strong economic and trade linkages with Nigeria (e.g. more than half of exports in 2018). This relationship has aided Benin when Nigerian growth has been robust, but it has also increased risks and limited the structural transformation of the economy. As a result, aside from agriculture, the economy is dominated by informal commerce and trade. The low-productivity informal economy represents 65 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs approximately 90 percent of the labor force.⁷ Consequently, poverty and poor human capital results remains a defining characteristic of Benin.

5. **Facing two external shocks, Nigeria's border closure since August 2019, and the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Benin's growth will be challenged in 2020.** Economic activity remained robust in 2019 with real GDP growth reaching 6.9 percent in 2019 (4 percent per capita) as manufacturing and services picked up, compensating for the fall in exports due to the border closure with Nigeria. However, due to the combined effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and protracted border closure, growth is expected to sharply drop to 3.2 percent in 2020. Benin has one of the lowest levels of tax-revenue to GDP in SSA, amounting to 10.6 percent in 2019, rapidly limiting its response capacity to external shocks.

6. **A protracted COVID-19 crisis is likely to substantially reduce household income, possibly undermining some of the welfare gains of recent years.** In 2019, 44.5 percent of the population was estimated to live under the poverty line of US\$1.9/day (2011 PPP) based on World Bank projections. Under the baseline scenario, with real GDP per capita only increasing by 0.5 percent in 2020, poverty reduction decelerates significantly from an annual pace of about 3 percent in the previous two years to virtually zero in 2020. More alarming, poverty rates reach pre-2016 levels under the downside scenario in 2020, as real GDP per capita declines by 1 percent and growth in agriculture and services is hampered, reverting recent gains in poverty reduction. Poor households will be primarily affected by a loss of labor and non-labor income.⁸ The expected effects of containment measures on food prices will also be particularly detrimental for vulnerable households. Further, on top of these traditional channels are the added shocks linked to health, the disruption of public service delivery (e.g. school feeding programs), and

⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision.

⁵ Benin ranks 22 out of 217 in terms of percentage of the population with an age under 15 (World Bank staff estimates based on age/sex distributions of United Nations Population Division's World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision).

⁶ INSAE, State of Employment in Benin (August 2017).

⁷ Systematic Country Diagnostic 2017, Report 114822-BJ.

⁸ If low as a share of GDP (1.9 percent in 2019), remittances tend to represent a significant share of poor household income.



the medium-term impact of the sale of productive assets. The latter would have negative repercussions on human capital accumulation in the long term. The GoB’s National Response Plan should help mitigate these negative effects.

7. **Anticipating the large economic and social impacts of COVID-19**, authorities have requested technical and financial support from International Financial Institutions (IFIs). On May 15, 2020, the IMF Executive Board completed the 6th and final review of the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) Arrangement. The completion of the sixth review enabled the disbursement of SDR 91.931 million (about US\$125 million); of which SDR 76.013 million (about US\$103.3 million) to support the COVID-19 response requested by the Government. The World Bank, in turn, is supporting the health sector through three ongoing operations⁹ (US\$138million) and is preparing rapid budget support program through Supplemental Financing (US\$50 million)¹⁰. Despite these commitments, the financing gap remains large.

8. **Progress towards the education-related Social Development Goals (SDGs) has been steady but achieving the envisaged targets will require a more rapid rate of progress than those observed during the previous decade.** Achieving universal completion rates and gender parity are two key aims of the SDGs. Improvement in the primary completion rate (PCR) has been too slow in recent years (65 percent in 2005/2006 vs. 67.5 percent in 2017/2018) to put the country on track to achieve universal primary completion. Similarly, although there is progress on gender parity in lower secondary education—with the gender parity index (GPI) increasing from 54.5 percent in 2005/2006 to 88.1 percent in 2017-2018—additional efforts are needed to achieve equal access for girls and young women across all levels of education.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

9. Tangible progress has been made in increasing access to basic education as shown in Table 2, even if the trend decreased from 2016.

Table 2: Evolution of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) and Completion Rate in Basic Education (in percent) from 2011 to 2019

	Gross Enrolment rate (GER)			Completion rate		
	2010/11	2015/16	2018/19	2010/11	2015/16	2018/19
Preschool	11.6	15.6	16.8			
Primary school	114.5	115.4	108.3	69.6	71.3	54.8
Lower secondary school	62.9	70	50.1	40.8	44.4	40.9

Source: DPP/MEMP and DPP/MESTFP-Benin

9 The three operations are: Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement Program (REDISSE), CERC of Nutrition Project and Benin COVID-19 fats-track project.

10 The proposed Development policy Operations (DPO) provides an additional funding of US\$ 50 million for the first Fiscal Reform and Structural Transformation to help the Government of Benin fill an unanticipated financing gap due to the impact of COVID-19 outbreak.



10. **Despite achievements in terms of increased access to education, there are persistent and considerable geographic and social disparities in the provision and quality of primary education services.** The 12 regions (see map in Annex) of the country can be classified into four groups with regards to Gross Intake Rate (GIR) and Primary Completion Rate (PCR). The first group includes the Alibori region where the primary GIR (35 percent) and PCR (24 percent)¹¹ are particularly low. The second group includes the Atacora and Borgou regions, which both have an average primary GIR of 68 percent and a PCR of 56 percent and 47 percent, respectively. The third group is comprised of Atlantique, Collines, Couffo, Donga, Plateau and Zou regions, where the primary GIR is between 80 and 90 percent and the PCR between 56 and 65 percent. The fourth group includes the regions of Littoral, Ouémé, and Mono, which had a relatively high primary GIR of 97 percent and a high PCR of 73 percent. According to the 2016 statistical yearbook, there are 20 deprived school districts with a PCR below 50 percent. A total of 11 out of the 20 deprived school districts, are in the Alibori and Borgou regions.¹²

11. **The gender gap widens as students move through the education system.** Although the difference in enrollment rates and completion rates between boys and girls at the primary level is relatively small (PCR is 66 percent for girls vs. 71 percent for boys), the gender gap widens as students move through the education system, with girls' enrollment consistently lagging behind that of boys. Indeed, while the intake rate for girls is 62 percent and 70 percent for boys in Lower Secondary Education (*Premier Cycle de l'Enseignement Secondaire Général*, LSE), completion rates are only 39 percent for girls and 51 percent for boys.

12. **As part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Benin closed all schools (preschool, primary, secondary, vocational education, and universities) through May 10, 2020.** Initially, on March 24, 2020, the Government decided to close schools from March 30 to April 13, 2020. Given the rapid spread of the virus, the Government subsequently extended school closures until May 10, 2020. Consequently, about 16,000 schools (all levels of education combined) were closed, affecting more than 3.3 million students and 88,000 teachers. Pursuant to the Government's recent decision: (i) schools reopened on May 11 for grade 6 and secondary level students; and (ii) grades 1 to 5 students are expected return to schools from August 4 to September 11 in order to complete the 2019-2020 school year.

13. **The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to negatively impact the education sector in a number of ways:**

- **Spending on the education sector could also be affected, thus impacting quality of education.** In recent years, total expenditures (recurrent and capital) for education have averaged 28 percent of government expenditures (excluding debt service), representing about 4.3 percent of GDP. The financial prioritization of the education sector has been crucial to: (i) support extension of school canteens program; (ii) provide textbooks and learning materials for basic education; and (iii) recruit new teachers, among others. Because the COVID-19 pandemic will likely to reduce economic activity and growth, Government revenues are also expected to dramatically drop. Given fiscal constraints that may result from the crisis, the teaching environment may worsen because non-salary expenditures, which are already low, could be further reduced (it is unlikely

¹¹ The source for access rates used here is EMICOV 2015.

¹² All six of the districts in Alibori and five out the eight districts in Borgou, are classified as deprived according to the 2016 statistical yearbook.



that the Government would lower spending for salaries). Expenditures for textbooks, learning materials, or infrastructure improvements could decline, worsening the quality of education provided.

- **School closures are expected to lead to learning loss and increased inequality.** Learning poverty has existed before the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of schools will not only exacerbate learning poverty, but also increase learning inequality because the wealthiest families will be able to maintain their children’s learning at home by providing textbooks and other learning materials or hiring private tutors to mitigate any interruption in instruction. Therefore, once schools re-open, some children will find themselves at a disadvantage compared to their better educated peers.
- **Student dropout rates could rise, negatively impacting the primary completion rate, as well as transition rates to secondary education.** Because the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a severe economic crisis, households are facing rising unemployment and income losses: these trends will likely continue once school sessions resume. The economic downturn may cause the poorest households to keep children at home even after school re-opens, increasing the number of out-of-school children. Therefore, the PCR will likely decrease, putting the country off-track to achieve the education SDGs. In addition, parents’ ability to contribute to educational inputs may also be more limited, impacting the quality of schooling provided.
- **School closures may also disproportionately impact girls.** The crisis could lead to an increase in the burden of care-related tasks. Girls may often be expected to take on additional responsibilities due to social expectations, such as household and domestic chores. In economically disadvantaged areas, girls tend to marry and have children early. Additional barriers to girls’ school participation and retention include poverty and high school fees, poor infrastructure and distances to schools, unsafe learning environments, and increased exposure to violence and sexual harassment or abuse.
- **Teaching quality will likely suffer.** The increase in food prices may lead to lower purchasing power of teachers, which in turn, may reduce teachers’ motivation and the teaching quality. In addition, teachers are not trained to conduct remedial education.

14. **In this context, maintaining and/or increasing enrollment rates once schools re-open would require several actions:** communications and awareness-raising campaigns; reduction of the opportunity cost of schooling for poorer families; actions to secure safe and inclusive schools; etc.

15. **To mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 the Government prepared an education response plan.** Following school closures, a sector response task force, including education partners, has been put in place to strengthen the education sector’s ability to effectively mitigate—as well as address—the negative impacts stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The response plan primarily aims at: (i) minimizing the adverse effects of COVID-19 pandemic on students, teachers and the education system at large; and (ii) enhancing the capacity of the MoEs and stakeholders to promote protection of students and teachers and ensure continuity of teaching. It represents an opportunity to build the core foundation required to foster improvements in the quality of the teaching and learning environment in Benin in the short term, as well



as in the medium and long-term. This will entail building robust remote learning systems and building the capacity of the Government—and by extension the education sector—to adequately deal with potential shocks and crises in the future.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

The proposed project's development objectives are to: (a) ensure continuity of teaching during and after the COVID - 19 pandemic, particularly in deprived communes in the Recipient's territory; and (b) increase the Government's preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises.

Key Results

PDO Level Indicators

16. Progress towards achievement of the PDO would be measured by the following indicators:

- Share of children previously enrolled in schools who return to school once the school system is re-opened (Total, girls and deprived communes);
- Schools equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19 (Total in percentage; number of schools)
- Schools offering remediation programs in deprived communes once the school system is re-opened (total in percentage, number of primary schools, number of lower secondary schools);
- National strategy for continuity of learning for all children developed and disseminated.

D. Project Description

17. To maximize the impact of the project, the Government and Local Education Group (LEG) jointly agreed to focus part of the project interventions on deprived communes which are communes where primary completion rate is below 50 percent. The negative spillover effects of the COVID-19 pandemic might be particularly severe in these deprived communes, thus justifying the Project's focus on providing targeted support to these vulnerable communities. Based on this criterion, 20 out of the 77 communes in the country were selected. The number of students in these 20 communes represents in 2020, 20 percent of primary students in public schools and 13.1 percent of lower secondary students in public schools. Interventions focusing only on deprived communes are under subcomponent 3 of the component 1. All other interventions are countrywide.

Component 1: Ensuring safe reopening of schools and return of students, particularly in deprived communes (US\$5.74 million)

18. ***Sub-component 1.1 Media campaign and community sensitization for returning to school and disease control and prevention.*** This sub-component will support community sensitization and



communication by financing community awareness campaigns within the communities through local community organizers and facilitators as well as radio/television campaigns to encourage parents and communities to send children back to school and maintain good hygiene practices during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

19. **Sub-component 1.2: Ensuring schools are safe for re-opening.** This sub-component will support: (i) WASH activities to ensure safe water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene education in schools; and (ii) the provision of hygiene kits. Most of these activities will be financed by providing grants to schools using the established school grants mechanism set up under the Government budget. It is also expected that UNICEF will play an active role in providing the installation of WASH facilities. Activities under this subcomponent include:

- (i) **Provision of hand washing facilities.** Given to its comparative advantages, and by utilizing resources allocated to this proposed Project, UNICEF will be responsible for providing schools with hand-washing stations. A contractual agreement between the Bank and UNICEF will be signed so that the latter institution can carry out this activity using the resources allocated to this proposed Project. These hand-washing stations will be installed at the entrance of each classroom and administrative office. A total of 20,440 hand-washing devices will be purchased by UNICEF and distributed as follows: 1,600 for preschools; 15,000 for primary schools; and 3,840 for lower secondary school (LSS). Schools which enrolled students with disabilities will be prioritized in the distribution of the hand-washing devices.
- (ii) **Provision of hygiene kits, soap, masks and water.** Grants provided by the Government in pre- and- primary schools and tuition fees collected in LSS will be used to acquire hygiene kits and soap where needed, as well as hand washing kits to schools that need the kits. The proposed Project will also provide grants to approximately 2,000 primary schools and 170 LSS. These grants will be used to introduce alternative measures for ensuring permanent availability of water for handwashing devices in schools without water points¹³. The proposed amount of the grant for each school is estimated to be on average US\$250 and US\$400 for primary and LSS, respectively. The actual amount to be allocated to schools will depend on the distance to be traveled to access the water point. In addition, the grants can be used to acquire masks for teachers and school administrators, particularly for those that are most vulnerable to the virus, in case where the ones promised by the Government have not been delivered on time.
- (iii) **Support for school infirmaries.** School grants can be used to provide infirmiry staff with training on good hygiene practices and prevention measures to curtail the spread of the virus. This may include training on identification of symptoms, provision of thermoflash (thermometer with

¹³ The Government has an ambitious program to provide universal access to water supply in both urban and rural areas by 2021. The program is under implementation. Discussions are underway with government agencies coordinating this program in order to set up connections with schools without water points in areas of interventions of project when possible. Currently, the coverage of water point is 46 percent and 76.5 percent for primary and secondary schools, respectively.



infrared ray), surgical masks, etc. The number of school infirmaries is 46 in LSS¹⁴. Each targeted school is expected to receive about US\$470.

20. **Sub-component 1.3: Ensuring continuity of learning and tracking of student progress.** Prior to schools' closures, much of the annual academic programs were delivered to learners. Despite academic programs being advanced, ensuring teaching and learning continuity is crucial to prevent learning losses and to reduce the risks of students dropping out. This component will: (i) support remedial programs for students at risk of repetition or dropping out; and (ii) provide subsidies to schools, through grants, to offset the cost of schooling in deprived communes. Activities under this sub-component will include the following:

- (i) **Provision of remedial (catch-up) programs for students at risk of repetition and dropping out in all grades of primary (grades 1 to 6) and grade 10 of lower secondary schools in the 20 deprived communes, particularly students with learning disabilities.** To plan for learning recovery at the re-opening of schools, learning gaps and learning loss will need to be assessed in key disciplines among grades 1 to 5 students¹⁵. The identification of students will apply to both public and private specialized schools for children with disabilities. Once identified, these students, along with those students in grades 6 and 10, will be provided with remedial programs to help them catch-up on grade level material. The remedial programs already exist and are currently offered to grade 6 students preparing for the final primary exam. To achieve this, the Project will: (i) provide resources to regional directorates to conduct rapid assessments of grades 1-5 students' knowledge to identify at risk students for remedial programs; and (ii) provide grants in an amount of US\$200 to approximately 1995 schools (of which 175 LSS), including 120 schools enrolling students with disabilities to cover internal travel cost of teachers on non-working days/hours to extend remedial programs to all grades of primary and grade 10 of lower secondary schools in the 20 deprived communes.
- (ii) **Compensation of part of incidental costs paid for school canteens in deprived communes.** Schools grants can also be used to provide subsidies to primary schools to run canteens in deprived communes, thereby reducing the cost to parents and students of running the canteens which may prevent disadvantage students from returning to school. The grants will cover three-fifth (3/5) of amount paid by parents in school canteens: 2,475 F CFA (about US\$4.5) per student. The estimated number of students concerned is 220,000.
- (iii) **Provision of school kits for deprived communes and children with disabilities.** The proposed Project will support the provision of school kits for both public and specialized schools for children with disabilities, comprised of school supplies and textbooks for grades 1 and 2 students in nine¹⁶ (9) deprived communes. Specifically, girls in grades 7 and 8 (2 first grades of lower secondary schools) in the 9 communes¹⁷ will also receive school kits, including textbooks in two key disciplines. The content of kits for each grade already exists. UNICEF is

¹⁴ There are no school infirmaries in primary schools

¹⁵ Schools have already been reopened for other grades in basic education.

¹⁶ The ongoing GPE project has been supported other 11 deprived communes in close collaboration with UNICEF.

¹⁷ UNICEF has been provided kits for grades 7 and 8 girl students in the 11 deprived communes.



expected to lead the implementation of these activities with additional resources from the current project, given their ongoing programs related to provision of kits including school supplies and uniforms, in close collaboration with the Bank and other donors, in 3 out of the 12 regions of the country: Borgou, Alibori, and Zou.

Component 2: Improving preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises (US\$0.72 million)

21. Component 2 aims to support the Government's efforts to strengthen the education system's resilience in the medium and long term.

22. **Sub-component 2.1: Expanding sustainable remote learning opportunities.** Expanding remote learning is the primary goal of sub-component 2.1. The proposed Project will support the Government's goal of establishing and mainstreaming distance learning systems and programs. This sub-component supports the following activities:

- (i) **Setting up the enabling environment for distance learning:** The proposed Project will support the development of partnerships between Ministries of Education and national radio and TV stations, as well as community radios and other local radios, to facilitate the broadcasting of distance learning courses. To enable the production of high-quality audio, visual and digital education content, production rooms will be equipped with the necessary material. The launch of the soon to be finalized global digital distance learning education platform¹⁸ will also be supported by the proposed Project.
- (ii) **Supporting teachers:** To ensure effective remote learning, teachers need to be adequately trained in distance teaching methods or other alternative forms of training which do not conform to the traditional face-to-face teaching modality. Training teachers in digital skills, in a context where teaching may increasingly involve the use of technological tools, is also essential. The number of teachers to be trained is estimated to be 300, of which 100 will be LSS teachers. An electronic tablet will be provided to each teacher involved in the training and a tracking system will be put in place to locate these devices and track their proper use. The proposed Project will also pilot the concept of blended classes, i.e. classes that combine distance learning with face-to-face lessons, in a small sample of classrooms.
- (iii) **Developing distance learning contents:** Teachers trained will develop remote, distance learning programs, as well as self-learning materials to be used mainly in cases of other shocks in key disciplines. The proposed Project will finance a pilot production of quality audio, visual and digital media as well as self-learning workbooks and other materials, including for children with learning difficulties and children with disabilities, to ensure equity in education and learning.

23. **Sub-component 2.2. Building capacity to anticipate and cope with future shocks in education.** The

¹⁸ A global digital distance learning education platform for West and Central Africa French speaking countries is under preparation with the support of the World Bank Education Global Practices and will be finalized by end July 2020.



objective of sub-component 2.2 is to build the capacity of the key education actors (from national level to school level) to be better prepared to cope with any future crises that may result in school closures or may lead to other detrimental effects on the education system. In other words, the objective of this sub-component is to build the overall resilience of the education system in Benin. Sub-component 2.2 supports the following activities:

- (i) **Setting up an enabling policy framework:** : The proposed Project will support an evaluation of COVID-19 education management; what has been done during the COVID-19 crisis and how it could have been done better. Establishing policies and good practices on how to maintain and/or improve teaching and learning during times of crisis is essential to ensure the resiliency of the education system is strengthened. These efforts should strive to draw upon the good practices and policies employed in countries across the world. The goal is to identify areas of relative strength and weakness and use this information to guide Benin’s policies and practices during emergencies. At the same time, this can be a shared endeavor in which Benin not only learns from other countries, but also shares its own experience and lessons learned with other countries. In addition, the proposed Project will support the development of a national strategy for education and learning continuity in the event of shocks and school closures. Further, an Education Emergency Response Plan will be developed and integrated into the Education Sector Plan 2018-2030. At school level, a guidance note on school re-openings will be developed to ensure better preparedness after floods or other types of natural disasters.

- (ii) **Building back better with an effective data system:** The post-COVID phase will offer many other opportunities to “build back better”. The proposed Project will support the strengthening of an effective data system, including the development of a methodology to identify vulnerable and at-risk students with the objective of more easily identifying and supporting them in the event of a crisis. This will allow the Ministry of Education to track whether learning outcomes are being maintained and/or improved, what factors are driving improvements, and what remedial measures need to be put in place to ensure that all students are provided with the opportunity to excel.

Component 3: Ensuring monitoring, management, and coordination of the project (US\$0.39 million)

24. Component 3 aims to ensure the effective implementation of the daily operations of the proposed Project and to build knowledge and competencies to improve services delivery. Overall, project management will be implemented by drawing heavily on the implementation arrangements which were established under the recently approved Benin Global Partnership for Education Project Phase 3 (P167432). Implementation arrangements are detailed under Annex 1. The component will support the following key interventions:

- (i) **Project management and coordination including the following activities:**
 - Preparation and execution of the eighteen (18) months’ work plan and budget, and procurement plan;
 - Monitoring of the results framework and quarterly reporting;



- Facilitate project communication;
- Efficient fiduciary and safeguards implementation and reporting; and
- Establishment and operationalization of a grievance redressal mechanism.

(ii) **Strengthening monitoring of the project activities.** The objective of this activity is to improve the capacity of the MoEs to systematically track progress in the implementation of the project based on the project results framework. To this end, the project will support: (i) the collection of school data on a regular basis; (ii) the STP responsible for monitoring the ESP indicators on behalf of the MoEs; and (iii) the *Coalition Beninoise des Organisations de l'Education pour Tous (CBO/EPT)*¹⁹ to report on citizen feedback on service delivery with the objective of identifying and addressing bottlenecks

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Environment

25. The Project’s components all aim at minimizing the adverse effects of COVID-19 on students, teachers, and the education system. The activities to be supported by the proposed Project generally have low environmental impact and potential health and safety risks to the communities, students, and teachers in view of activities involving mobilization of teachers, and the reopening of schools. The environmental, health and safety concerns arising from the proposed activities are mainly two: (i) continued risk of disease transmission; and (ii) management of solid waste and wastewater from hand washing facilities in the schools. The potential impacts and risks can be minimized through known measures to be included in the ESMF to be prepared by the Borrower.

26. The Project will be implemented by the MEMP and the MESFTP and the overall accountability of the proposed Project will rest with the General Secretary, MEMP. The MoEs will be responsible for the preparation and implementation of environment and safeguards instruments: Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) by the time project appraisal, as well as overall compliance enforcement of relevant national health and safety regulations and guidelines. One environment specialist and one social specialist will be recruited to be part of the PCU throughout the project lifecycle.

¹⁹ CBO/EPT is an umbrella organization of NGOs working for education in Benin



Social.

27. The expected activities aim mainly to: (i) support the implementation of the education sector COVID-19 response strategy; (ii) ensure effective continuity of student learning during and after the COVID -19 pandemic, particularly for the deprived communes; and (iii) improve preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises. The planned activities include: (i) media campaign and community sensitization for returning to school and disease control and prevention; (ii) provision of hand washing facilities ; (iii) subsidies to schools, through grants, to offset the cost of schooling in deprived communes; and (iv) development of distance learning contents. The proposed Project does not include construction or rehabilitation.

28. **The closure of the schools from March 30 to May 11, 2020, due to COVID -19 is likely to have affected the progress of the planned education curriculum and result in anxiety and uncertainty in continuity for students in school as well as teachers.** Both teachers and students have been rendered inactive for the closure period. Consequently, there is a risk that students have lost out on education. It is necessary to undertake mitigative actions to ensure that the impact of the closure of schools does not affect the progress of the students adversely, as well as empower the teachers and schools to bridge the gaps. Psycho-social support should be provided for the teachers and students.

29. **Due to the economic impacts of the COVID -19 on low earning households, some children may drop out of school.** Although schools have opened, some students may still dropout. To mitigate against this risk, it is necessary to provide back-to-school campaigns through the media and any other available practical channels as outlined in Component 1 of this proposed Project. This will encourage the parents to keep their children in school and provide continuity. Specific stakeholder engagement programs must be prepared for the parents on the benefits of keeping the children in school and attention should be given in the engagements to vulnerable students especially girl children and students with disabilities.

30. **Stakeholder Engagement and Grievance Redress Mechanism.** Regarding the emergency context of the preparation of this project, the Government—through the ministries of the education sector—will draft the Preliminary Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) in order to ensure a comprehensive, participatory, and coordinated stakeholder engagement and response to COVID-19 pandemic.

31. The ESCP will be developed to set out material measures and actions, any specific documents or plans, as well as the timing for each of these. The implementation of the material measures and actions set out in the ESCP will be monitored and reported to the WBG.

Risks

32. Overall project risks are judged to be moderate based on the SORT analysis.

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

33. **At the central level, apart from minor changes, the proposed Project will use the institutional arrangements of the Benin GPE Project- Phase 3 (P167432) which were inspired by the pooled fund**



arrangements. The modifications that will be made to accommodate the proposed Project are:

- (i) New members—with experience in health-related interventions and in the production of distance learning lessons—will be added to the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The new members are: (i) two representatives of Ministry of Health; (ii) one representative of Ministry of Digital Economy; and (iii) two representatives from the donor community in the education sector.
- (ii) The existing Technical Support and Monitoring Unit (*Unité d'Appui Technique et de Suivi, (UATS)*), which is a technical assistance provider, as well as the day-to-day coordinator of the Benin GPE Phase 3 project, will be further strengthened with the recruitment of three additional staff: (i) a procurement specialist assistant; (ii) a monitoring and evaluation specialist assistant; and (iii) and a social safeguard specialist.

34. At the operational level, apart from the UATS, the Technical Permanent Secretariat (*Secretariat Technique Permanent, (STP)*) and the Disbursement and Procurement Monitoring Committee (*Comité de suivi des Décaissements et des Marchés, (CSDM)*) will play an important role in the effective implementation of the activities. Their respective responsibilities are detailed in Annex 1.

35. Technical departments of the three ministries involved in the proposed Project will be in charge of the implementation of their respective activities. Under the authority of the Secretary General of the MEMP, the departments implementing the Project Components and Sub-components are described in Annex 1.

36. In each of the 12 regions, the proposed Project's activities will be coordinated by the regional directorates under the supervision of the Secretary General of each of the three ministries. For primary schools, the Sub-Regional School Inspectorates under the supervision of the Regional Directorates will be the key entities for overseeing project activities and compiling the data supplied by the schools for M&E.

37. At the school level, the school head is responsible for all the project activities taking place in the school, including the distribution of students' uniforms in primary schools and distribution of girls' kits and textbooks in lower secondary schools. At the community level, the COGEPs/ COGES composed of representatives of parents, school staff and local resource persons will be in charge of supporting schools to deliver the agreed results, and to monitor and report on the functioning of schools.

38. The above-mentioned arrangements are detailed in Annex 1 and will be complemented by an Annex to the existing Project Implementation Manual (PIM) developed for the Benin GPE Phase 3 operation, which sets forth all the operational and procedural steps for project implementation, including a detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of the aforementioned implementing units.



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