ESPIG Annual Progress Report Template for Projects

Status: Accepted

Country	**Name of project this grant is contributing to**	**Grant ID**	**Project ID (if applicable)**
Moldova	Moldova - MLT (June 16, 2022)	GPE0000644	SC220365
Grant Agent	**Grant Type**	**Approval Date**	**Grant Effectiveness / Start Date**
United Nations Children's Fund	MLT	06/16/2022	07/01/2022
Expected Closing Date	**Grant Amount**	**Timeframe Examined in this report**	**Date of Report Submission**
07/01/2025	4,672,895 (USD)	**From Date** 06/30/2023 **To Date** 06/29/2024	09/30/2024

Implementation Progress

Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

Overall Progress this Reporting Period 1
Satisfactory (S)

Previous Rating
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

Detailed Description including factors that lead to an upgrade/downgrade in the rating

(i) Major accomplishments this reporting period.

The main priority for the reporting period was to advance with the realization of the activities for two years, following the delay in the start of the Programme. To address the delays in implementation, the project tasks were prioritized based on their impact and urgency through frequent reviews, adaptive planning and monitoring the real-time progress. Stakeholder communication was prioritized, with transparent updates and feedback mechanisms in place. During this period, most of the planned deliverables for the 1st and 2nd years were either completed or in progress.

Also, a tripartite MoU between UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and Estonian Centre for International Development (EstDev) was concluded to facilitate the implementation of the Digital Competence Framework for Teachers (DigCompEdu) and the transfer of modern information and communication technologies (ICT), ensuring that best practices and innovative solutions are integrated into the Moldovan educational landscape. Moreover, the team has engaged in a productive collaboration with the e-Government Agency focusing on integrating advanced digital solutions, thus ensuring compliance with regulatory standards. By leveraging the agency's expertise and resources, we aim to achieve greater efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness. The integration of the tracking tool and its interconnection with other data systems will enable more accurate statistics on children who are out of school, which in turn will assist in the strategic planning of future activities.

To address the diverse needs of the children with special education needs (SEN) and/or children with disabilities, before the procurement of assistive technologies (AT), we engaged into cross-sectoral and ministerial discussions/consultations with the MER, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Health, NGOs. We also involved sector-specific agencies and organizations that specialize in AT, to provide insights on technical requirements and best practices.
In addition to agreeing on the list of the most essential AT to be procured, a collaborative mechanism and approach were established. This process informed stakeholders about the existing gaps and urgent

actions needed to enhance the effectiveness of the AT system. As a result, some important activities are being conducted by UNICEF programmes to support inclusive education. They envision a comprehensive analysis of the gaps in inclusive education, development of a reference guide for accessing AT, development of a referral mechanism of educational AT, etc.

The finalized activities and those currently in progress are listed below, with more detailed information on the results and implementation status provided in Annex 2.

Finalized activities:
- Development of the policy document on digitalization
- National ICT standards
- Mapping of general education institutions vis a vis the national program on digitalization and ICT standards
- Establishment of priority response criteria for the equipment of education institutions
- Approval of the DigCompEdu
- Needs assessment regarding the current equipment AT of the Republican Center for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance (RCPPA), Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Services (PPASs) and Resource Centres for Inclusive Education (RCEIs)
- Development of the Methodological Guide on Career Counselling
- Development of the Methodological Guide on the Wellbeing in schools
- Government Decision on Education Management Information System (EMIS) Regulation and MER Order on Instructions to ensure accurate data in EMIS
- EMIS review to identify where additional update/information is needed

In progress activities:
- Provision of ICT equipment for general educational institutions
- Development of the Methodology for the Assessment of Teachers' Digital Competences (MATDC) and of the Digital Technologies Curriculum for Teacher Professional Development (DTCTPD)
- Approval of equipment criteria and capacity needs for the procurement of assistive technologies
- Procurement of assistive technologies for RCPPA, PPASs and RCIE
- Development of the Study on Inclusion of Children with SEN in Education
- Trainings to enhance the psycho-pedagogical counselling services in all educational institutions based on developed guides
- Update EMIS
- Design and development of the tracking tool in EMIS.
- Promotion of the best digital education practices on public radio, TV stations and stream live on social media as part of thematic campaigns/shows targeting different categories of educational stakeholders
Most indicators have been successfully met as outlined in the monitoring and evaluation framework. Where certain indicators were not fully achieved, it was primarily due to the factors described below.

(ii) Which implementation challenges or delays the project experienced this reporting period; the reasons behind these issues; how (well) these have been mitigated thus far; and what remains to be done by whom and by when to address the challenges.

During the reporting period, the project faced several implementation challenges and delays, primarily due to the postponed start of the Programme. The delays in the first year of implementation were primarily caused by multiple factors: the escalation of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, creating a humanitarian and human rights crisis; significant political changes, including the resignation of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the appointment of a new administration; and changes in UNICEF's internal recruitment policies, which delayed the recruitment process. Despite the complexity of the tasks remaining the same, the Programme now faces the challenge of implementing them within the available timeframe.

Furthermore, the innovative additions to the action plan with the focus on digital books, an initiative being launched for the first time in Moldova demands substantial effort and resources. The Multiplier team has been conducting extensive research of international practice and held numerous meetings with international companies and experts, MER, publishers, and authors in textbook digitalization. Also, the newly added activities that relate to the development of a digital pedagogy curriculum for TPD and the methodology for the assessment of digital competencies impacted the overall project implementation, since a lot of coordination and adjustments are required for the management of these complex activities.

Moreover, the Programme has faced challenges due to the lack of appropriate and qualified consultants, which led to the need to relaunch some announcements.
Additionally, several deliverables require more time for consultations and modifications based on the feedback received from various stakeholders, including beneficiaries and authorities.
Lastly, the development of a tracking system to evaluate the needs of each student has faced delays. This system relies on data from the EMIS and other national information systems, which need to be integrated. The interdependence of these systems has slowed progress, as the necessary connections have not yet been fully established.
To address these challenges, continuous close coordination with the MER and stakeholders, timely decision-making, and possibly seeking additional expertise are critical.
As a final note, it is important to emphasize that all remaining activities are substantial in scope and require increased attention to ensure their successful implementation. Given the complexity and significance of these tasks, a non-cost extension will be necessary to adequately complete the work and achieve the project's goals within the revised timeline and at an appropriate level of quality.

(iii) Factors that led to any upgrade/downgrade in the progress rating above, compared with the previous reporting period (if any).

To achieve the Programme goals, we relied on effective leadership and management practices, comprehensive project planning that detailed tasks, timelines, and resources, as well as regular monitoring and evaluation. These elements were instrumental in driving the programme implementation forward. Additionally, open and continuous communication with the MER and other stakeholders, along with efficient coordination throughout all stages, played a key role in the successful implementation of the Programme.

(iv) Whether any progress was made in mitigating previous reporting periods' challenges or delays (if any).

Considerable progress was made in mitigating last year's challenges. All planned activities are either finalized or ongoing, of which most are at their final stage. The UNICEF team has been fully engaged in strategically approaching the implementation and addressing the challenges in collaboration with the MER.

Project Implementation Progress, by Component / Objective

No Data Available

Lessons, innovative/promising practices

Advancing with the system level activities and having signed the MoU with MER and EstDev, UNICEF has been able to advance the goal of digitalization, by creating a strategic framework and a platform for driving the digital transformation of the education system. As a result, a working group that includes partners such as USAID, FTA (Future Technology Activity), and UNDP was established under the leadership of the MER and UNICEF. The group convenes weekly to oversee all digital initiatives, outline the digital goals, key interventions, and facilitate communication, monitor performance, and adjust strategies.

Another promising outcome is the integration of digital textbooks and resources into the national education system. This initiative has the potential to revolutionize the way educational content is delivered and accessed. Moreover, the digital textbooks will include a tool that allows for continuous updates and improvements, ensuring they integrate new educational approaches and align with ongoing curriculum

revisions. This adaptability is important for keeping the educational content relevant and effective in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Impact stories

NA

Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, Results Framework and other Supporting Documentation

#	File Name	Document Type	Description
1	2.Integrated Results Framework _GPE_Year 2.pdf	Results Framework	
2	4.Order No. 1110 from 04.09.2023_Approval of DigCompEdu DigCompEdu.pdf	Knowledge Product	Ministry of Education and Research Order on the approval of DigCompEdu
2	5.Order No. 675 from 07.05.2024_ Minimun standards.....pdf	Knowledge Product	Ministry of Education and Research Order on the approval of the Minimum Standards for the endowment of general education institutions with ICT
2	6.Order No. 274 from 01.03.2024_EMIS Regulation.pdf	Knowledge Product	Ministry of Education and Research Order on EMIS Regulation
2	7.Government Decision_EMIS Regulations_HG_320_2024.pdf	Knowledge Product	Government Decision on the regulations for the registration, maintenance, and processing of information within the EMIS
2	8.Order No. 477 from 11.04.2024_Priority Response Criteria for the selection of schools_ICT.pdf	Knowledge Product	Ministry of Education and Research Order on the approval of the priority response criteria for the selection of schools
2	9.Order No. 1237 from 03.09.2024_Roadmap for the digitalization of the education sector.pdf	Knowledge Product	Ministry of Education and Research Order on the approval of the roadmap for the digitalization of the education sector
2	10.Methodological Guide on Career Counseling.pdf	Knowledge Product	- Methodological Guide on Career Counseling
2	11.Methodological Guide on the Wellbeing in School.pdf	Knowledge Product	- Methodological Guide on the Wellbeing in School
2	1.Annex 2 Project Implementation Progress, by ComponentObjective.pdf	Evaluation Report	Progress report - Project Implementation by Component
2	General overview of the approved budget against the expenses ongoing contracts.pdf	Knowledge Product	Financial Report

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

Financial Reporting & Grant Management

Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate

Approved Budget to Date	Cumulative Expenditure	Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate	Level of Financial Absorption
5,000,000	467,429.47	9.35	Off Track

Since the financial absorption is not rated as 'on track', please provide an explanation that identifies the main activities that have been delayed and their corresponding unspent amounts, as well as reasons for the delay and steps taken to ensure that expenditure absorption gets on track in the next reporting period.

The low absorption rate in this reporting period is primarily attributed to several factors: activities that were initiated but not yet finalized and contracts that were signed but not fully paid by the end of the reporting period.

A significant portion of the budget was allocated for the procurement of ICT ($1,500,000) and AT equipment ($500,000). While the procurement process for the AT equipment was finalized in July 2024 (3rd year of implementation), the procurement of ICT equipment that was planned for the 3rd year was conducted earlier and is now at its final stage, with the delivery and installation of the ICT equipment planned to be conducted by the end of April 2025. The entire procurement processes were quite complex and challenging due to the external market's shocks and colatilities caused by the Ukraine conflict. This had a cascading effect on the scheduling of training sessions on the use of AT and ICT equipment (total budget $50,000), as the trainings depend on the delivery and installation of the equipment.

Another activity that affected the overall absorption rate of the budget is the development of the DTCTPD. The project team made significant progress in this regard; the curriculum has been developed and is currently awaiting MER approval. Following the approval of the curriculum, the project will initiate training sessions for 10,000 education staff ($150,000).

Similarly, the training sessions for teaching staff, aimed at extending psycho-pedagogical counseling services across all educational institutions with a focus on wellbeing and career counseling, have been slightly rescheduled. This delay is due to the lengthier piloting process of the guide's content in three Moldovan schools, as well as awaiting approval from MER on the final drafts. Both guides have now been finalized and approved by MER. Terms of Reference (TOR) for contracting an event management services company to prepare the training materials and organize the training sessions have been published. The training sessions are scheduled for October - November 2024. The total budget allocated for the reporting period for the training sessions is $100,000.

Another activity that has been started but not yet finalized is the consultancy for the update of EMIS and provision of training to EMIS users. The consultancy competition was advertised in May and now is under financial revision.

Additionally, several contracts were started but the payments for these were not completed in the reporting period due to delayed submission and approval of deliverables. The delays arose from challenges in aligning schedules among stakeholders and the need for additional reviews of the deliverables to ensure the quality and compliance with the project's requirements. The list of ongoing contracts for which the financial obligations were not fully closed by the end of the reporting period is available attached (Financial report, Table 1). Currently, from the list of five contracts, only one remains outstanding, the Study on the Inclusion Edu for SEN.

The general overview of the approved budget against the expenses incurred for the second year of implementation is represented in the Financial report, Table 2. The programmable amount for the second year of implementation was $1,510,173.00 out of which $333,815.34 were utilized representing 22% from the annual budget. Although the utilization rate for the second year is only 22%, considerable preparatory works and interdependent tasks are underway, such as conclusion of contracts for procurement of ICT equipment, organizing trainings on the use of ICT and AT equipment as well as teacher trainings on two developed guides and Digital Technology Curriculum. By the end of the 2024 year, it is expected that expenditures will reach 55% of the planned budget.

Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period
1,510,173

Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period
333,815.34

Explanation for underspending or overspending in excess of 10%
A detailed explanation for the delay is presented above, for each activity.

Management Performance

Level of Management Performance
Satisfactory (S)

Previous Rating
Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description
New approaches and visions were discussed with the Director of the Programme, Minister Dan Perciun, which led to an amendment to the work plan, submitted in March 2024. Additionally, the Ministry requested the organization of consultation meetings with all donors to synchronize activities within the education sector in digitalization of the education system. This coordination allowed for the prioritization and de-prioritization of various activities, as some planned initiatives depended on those being implemented by other donors. These meetings helped ensure that efforts were aligned, and resources were used efficiently, providing a clearer understanding of what and when certain activities would occur, which is beneficial for future planning. A Steering Committee (SC) meeting was conducted on 29 January 2024, followed by another meeting with the Local Education Group (LEG) on 31 January 2024, where the revisions to the Multiplier grant were presented and approved. Subsequently, a formal request for the revision of the grant was submitted to the GPE secretariat. As of 6 May 2024, the proposed revisions to Moldova's Multiplier Grant were approved by the GPE Secretariat.

Revisions to the grant

This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the GPE Board or Secretariat for their approval?
No

How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the GPE Board or Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?
Highly Likely

Detailed Description
It is highly likely that the government and the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the GPE Board or Secretariat within the next twelve months. The project will require an extension to adequately complete the remaining activities. This extension is necessary due to the complexity and scope of the tasks, particularly the innovative digital books initiative, which is being implemented for the first time in Moldova. The extension will ensure that the project can achieve its goals and deliver the intended outcomes without compromising quality or effectiveness.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description

AT	Assistive Technology
CICTE	Center for Information and Communication Technologies in Education
CN	Concept Note
DS-2030	Development Strategy Education –2030
DigCompEdu	European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators
DTCTPD	Digital Technologies Curriculum for Teacher Professional Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESPIG	Education Sector Programme Implementation Grant
ESTDEV	Estonian Centre for International Development
GA	Grant Agent
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IE	Inclusive Education
LEG	Local Education Group
MATDC	Methodology for the Assessment of Teachers' Digital Competences
MER	Ministry of Education and Research
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MGSC	Multiplier Grant Steering Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PC	Personal Computers
PPAS	Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Services
RCIE	Resource Centres for Inclusive Education
RCPPA	Republican Center for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance
SC	Steering Committee
SEN	Special Education Needs

Annex 2: Global Numbers Reporting Template

Provide the data related to GPE's three global numbers for this reporting period below:

- Textbooks purchased and distributed
- Teachers trained
- Classrooms built or rehabilitated

Note: For cofinanced grants, please provide the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 50 percent of a teacher training activity, the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant for the number of teachers trained through that activity would be 50%.if the unit of analysis in the indicator is the number of schools and not classrooms, please enter an estimated number of classrooms and provide an explanation in the comments box.

GPE Indicators

Textbooks purchased and distributed

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)	Comments
1				

GPE Indicators

Teachers trained

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)	Comments
1		0	0	

GPE Indicators

Classrooms built or rehabilitated

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)	Comments
1		0	0	

Provide the cumulative number of children (both in school and out of school) who directly participated in project activities, received project-supported incentives or services, or benefited from project interventions so far. Also provide relevant disaggregated values by sex (applicable to all grants). If appropriate and available, provide disaggregated values by varied subgroups and by education level. Reporting beneficiary data cumulatively means counting all beneficiaries as a running total, adding up all beneficiaries since the start of the grant and up to the end of this reporting period. Data on beneficiaries are to be collected using the methods and tools proper to each project. It is understood that some disaggregated data will only be collected if a project expressly targets specific subgroups through their interventions and uses their own methods for counting beneficiary children/other students.

NOTE: For cofinanced grants, please provide the numbers for the entire program and indicate the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 40 percent of the program that is cofinanced by GPE and other donors, enter 40% in the "% attributed to this grant.

	Pre-primary (optional)	Primary (optional)	Secondary (optional)	Others (optional)	Total	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)
Number of children who directly benefited from the project so far:						
Of which, girls:						
Of which, children with a disability (optional):						
Of which, refugee children (optional):						
Of which, internally displaced children (optional):						
Of which, out-of-school children, in school age (optional):						
Of which, children from marginalized ethno-cultural/ linguistic minorities: specify which ones (optional):						

Provide any comments on beneficiary children, if needed. This could include for example: the definition employed by the project for a particular subgroup (including a more granular description of these subgroups), the approach/tool used to calculate the number of beneficiaries overall or by subgroup, any limitation of the approach/tool employed for this calculation, and reasons why data on beneficiary children is unavailable. Please provide the number or proportion of girls for varied subgroups in the comment section below, if available.

1 Highly Unsatisfactory - The project has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory - The project has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory - The project has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs, but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory - The project is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderaten shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory - The project is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory -The project is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

2 Highly Unsatisfactory - The component/objective has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory -The component/objective has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory -The component/objective has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs, but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory- The component/objective is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory- The component/objective is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory-The component/objective is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.