I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Located on the western coast of Central Africa, Cameroon is neighbor to Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. Its population was estimated 20 million in 2011. Cameroon is a lower middle income economy with a GDP per capita of US$1,271 in 2011. Real GDP per capita has grown by only 1 percent per year on average over the past 10 years. Economic growth has been modest over the past decade and was further negatively affected by the global crisis that led to weaker demand for Cameroon's non-oil exports, such as timber, rubber and cotton. The economy rebounded in 2010 and 2011, with real GDP growth reaching 3.2 percent in 2010 and 3.8 percent in 2011. Cameroon is a relatively small oil producer and the main drivers of economic growth come from the non-oil economy, while oil activities continue to decline due to depleting reserves, aging equipment, and postponement of new oil development projects due to the global economic slowdown.
2. Poverty rates declined between 1996 and 2001 by some 13 percentage points, but have since stagnated at around 40 percent of the population. National average figures, however, mask strong regional disparities. Between 2001 and 2007, poverty rates increased in four regions (Adamaua, East, North, and Far North), with the two northern regions seeing the biggest increase. Despite a high rate of urbanization—with 56 percent of the population residing in urban areas in 2007—87 percent of the poor were living in rural areas. There is a growing income gap between regions, urban and rural areas, and between rich and poor.

3. In 2010, Cameroon was largely off-track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Universal primary schooling was flagged as the one goal that could potentially be reached by 2015, but recent data on primary completion show that this is not the case. The central challenge identified was that of stimulating a healthy rate of growth, and ensuring that growth is equitably shared. Debt relief in 2006 helped Cameroon become more debt sustainable and increased fiscal space for government spending linked to poverty reduction. Cameroon is one of the least aid-dependent countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and works with a relatively small number of development partners.

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

Fragmented institutional context for education.

4. The institutional context for education in Cameroon is fragmented. The responsibility for overseeing/providing education is divided between five ministries, one for each of the education sub-sectors: primary, secondary, technical & vocational, higher education, and the fifth, the Ministry of Youth. Moreover, there are two education systems functioning in parallel: one for the Francophone and one for the Anglophone parts of the country. One of the main differences between the two is in the organization of secondary schooling. The 2012 draft sector strategy includes provisions to harmonize the two sub-systems. Private schools account for a relatively large share of enrollments at all levels of schooling, particularly in urban areas. The Ministry of Economy, Planning and Territorial Management (MINEPAT) heads the Steering Committee for the Education Sector.

**Sectoral and Subsectoral Financing.**

5. Total education spending as a percentage of total national spending showed a steady upward trend from 13.9% in 1995 to 25.8% in 2003. Data for the period 2004-2006 is missing. But total education spending declined from to 20% in 2007 and further down to 16.3% in 2011. Based on an analysis of the budget and intersectoral arbitrage over time, the total education expenditure seems to be returning to the 1997-1999 level and tending to stagnate at 18.5%. Recurrent expenditure for the 6-16 age brackets in 2011 constant terms shows increase over time. From an international comparative perspective, the GDP per capita allocation for education at 3.2% in Cameroon in 2011 shows clearly that the country is significantly below the regional average of 4.4% and in those countries that are more advanced outside Sub-Saharan Africa. Cameroon would benefit from increasing budgetary allocation to education by a third to align sectoral budget to the international average. Within the framework of the 2006 Education Sector Strategy, the Government had committed to increase education spending to 19.5 percent of the national budget, but actual allocations fell short of this target; the budget share for education decreased from 17% between 2007 and 2009 to only 16.3% in 2011. The share allocated to basic education was 38 percent in 2009.
Subsectoral financing reveals a stark picture, with secondary education receiving a relatively large allocation (143%) in 2011 compared to primary (82%) or higher education (66.7%). The explanation is in part due to the growing numbers enrolling in secondary education. To this extent it could be inferred that efforts to universalize primary education is showing progress. However, enrollments in primary schooling are also increasing. There is growing pressure to increase access to education, but an even greater need to finance quality improvements.

Unit cost of education.

6. At primary education level there has been an increase in the unit cost (about 18% higher between 2002 and 2011), albeit the 2011 level of 7.8% for Cameroon is less dramatic than the unit cost increase in the Ivory Coast (18.3%), Ghana (17.8%), Burkina Faso (16.6%), and Senegal (16.4%). This is due on the one hand to the increase in out-of-pocket expenses for parents, and on the other hand due to the introduction of better paid contract teachers to replace the instituteurs vacataires (short-term contract teachers). This reform has more than compensated the decrease in the number of civil service teachers.

7. High out-of-pocket expenses. A striking feature of the Cameroonian education system is the high out-of-pocket expenses at 42% of total education expenditure compared to 21% in Senegal and 13% in Niger. These costs are mostly related to pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. Private financing is used in large proportion to pay for teachers through PTA fee collection, in both primary and secondary education. Primary education is relatively expensive for families. About 18% of primary school teachers are paid by parents (maître des parents). The percentage is even higher in the rural areas where education coverage is also low. On average the re the public sector pupil-teacher ratio is approximately 55:1 in public schools, 82:1 in the Far North and 33:1 in the South.

Public resource mobilization for the education sector depends to a large extent on macroeconomic factors, in particular, (i) global economic growth; and (ii) fiscal and other exogenous pressures from the government. However, a portion of additional resources for primary education could also be generated from an intersectoral arbitrage in favor of the education sector. For this to occur, political will in favor of the education sector is required. MINEPAT has agreed to progressively increase the budget for education over the 2014-2016 period until the budget is back to the 20% level. The seriousness of intent will be articulated in the letter of sector policy.

Surge in enrollments, but girls’ school participation lags behind that of boys.

8. Over the past 15 years, the education sector has experienced a strong expansion in school enrollments at all levels of education. Total enrollments across all levels are now over 5.7 million students, of which almost 3.6 million attend primary school. In 2010-11, the gross enrollment rate was 17 percent in pre-primary, 109 percent in primary, 58 percent in lower secondary, and 38 percent in upper secondary.

9. Cameroon's primary completion rate has also improved at a rapid pace in recent years, but is still well below what is needed to attain universal primary schooling. In 2011, the primary completion rate was in the range of between 71.5 and 81.3 percent, depending on the source of data used. Despite the fact that schooling is officially free, many families—particularly the poor—cite very high costs of schooling as one of the main reasons for dropout. There are wide disparities in school attendance based on gender and socio-economic characteristics. Net attendance for rural girls is
only about 65 percent, compared with 79 percent for rural boys. The gender gap is narrower in urban areas, where school attendance is high for all children. The gender parity index for primary completers has remained around 0.85 since the late 1980s.

Overall weak status of education service delivery and learning outcomes.

10. Cameroon has relatively weak service delivery indicators. In public primary schools, pupil-teacher ratios improved through the Contract Teacher Program (CTP), but are still moderately high at an average of around 52 students per teacher. Further, student-teacher ratios vary considerably from one region to another, between a low of 32 in the rural Littoral Region and a high of 82 in the rural area of the Far North Region. There are three types of teachers: civil servants, contract teachers, and teachers hired and paid by communities/parents (maîtres des parents). The first two groups have the required teacher qualifications, while not all community teachers have the required training.

Consistent with the status of service delivery, learning outcomes are also weak.

11. Cameroon’s results on the PASEC test declined between 1998 and 2005, although still higher than in many other Francophone countries in Africa. Between 2006 and 2010, there was an improvement in student flow indicators through lower dropout and repetition and an overall sense that the quality was improving. However, the 2009 PASEC shows that learning outcomes have likely declined further since 2005, and the 2011 early grade reading assessment (EGRA) found that 49 percent of 3rd graders students had great difficulty with reading, and 27 percent could not read at all. The average test results of the PASEC mask within grade differences as shown by the EGRA results.

ZEP and rural areas have weaker service delivery and human development outcomes.

12. The 2006 Education Sector Strategy identified certain geographical areas as priority for government support to raise schooling access, attainment, and achievement, as they were lagging behind the rest of the country in education outcomes. These Zones d’Éducation Prioritaires (ZEP) are comprised of four provinces (Far North, North, Adamaoua, East) and certain “pockets of low levels of school participation in the largest cities”, and of the border regions.

Severe shortage of teaching and learning materials.

13. There is a severe shortage of teaching and learning materials in primary schools. On average only 11 percent of students had access to textbooks in 2009/10. The national average figures mask significant regional differences. In the disadvantaged areas, there are practically no textbooks in the classrooms or one textbook for every 50 or 100 students. Teaching materials are also of limited quantity and of poor quality. There is no good system of getting textbooks in the hands of children in Cameroon, although there is a textbook policy that is now being revised. Cost and availability are issues constraining access to textbooks for students as well as teachers. Being cognizant of the situation, the Government is taking steps to reform the system through the development of a new policy on teaching and learning materials. In December 2012 the government launched a forum for a new textbooks policy. The text of the proposed new policy is currently being reviewed at the Presidential level.
The status of school infrastructure.

14. Classroom construction and rehabilitation has been insufficient over the course of the last few years. Although average pupil-classroom ratios are fairly reasonable, many schools are overcrowded or have infrastructure in need of repairs. Some classrooms are not in use because of disrepair. Insufficiency in schooling infrastructure has led to schools resorting to double shifts. This has contributed to decreasing the time on task for teachers and students. In ZEP areas, there are severe classroom shortages, classrooms constructed out of temporary materials, absence of latrines and water points, and limited numbers of chairs and tables for students.

Weaknesses in the system of education statistics and learning assessment.

15. The education management information system (EMIS) in Cameroon is complicated by the fact that there are four ministries of education, each of which collects data for the own sub-sector. There is considerable variability in the completeness and reliability of data collected by different ministries. Access to EMIS data for the general public is still very limited. There is no concerted effort to widely disseminate education statistics. At present there is no national assessments framework in Cameroon. Student learning achievement is mainly tested at the end of the primary and secondary education cycles through high-stakes exams. There currently exists no formative evaluation of learning achievements. Cameroon has participated in several rounds of PASEC and recently carried out a national early grade reading assessment. The President of Cameroon places great emphasis on mathematics and science education, as a foundation for science and engineering studies, and the Government is keen on carrying out an early grade mathematics assessment in the near future. There is a need for placing these different assessments within a more systematic national assessment framework, that emphasizes the development of national technical capacity for assessment, wider sharing of assessment results, and improving the feedback loop from assessment results to those responsible for curriculum and teacher training.

Governance issues.

16. Weak governance has been identified as one of the cross-cutting issues hampering faster growth and poverty reduction in Cameroon overall. Weak governance and accountability is also pervasive in the education sector. Tackling this issue is made complicated by the fragmentation in the management of the education sector. At a project level, aspects such as political interference, procurement delays, price distortions due to lack of competition, and institutional inertia to undertake timely decisions contribute to the problem.

Alignment with the government's education sector strategy (2013-2020).

17. The project is also aligned with the Government's strategic objective of achieving a well-educated human resources base in support of Cameroon’s quest to emerge as a strong middle-income economy by 2035. This strategic objective is communicated in various national strategic documents, including the vision document entitled Cameroun emergent à l’horizon 2035 and Cameroon’s Strategy for Growth and Employment. Cameroon is in the process of updating its Education Sector Strategy for 2013-20. The results of background diagnostic work were presented at a national workshop in February 2013. Much of this analytical work has been funded under the World Bank IDA-financed “Education Development Capacity Building” Project, including an update of the Country Status Report for the sector. The preliminary findings of the diagnostic work
and the strategic directions of the education sector strategy are currently being finalized. The project responds directly to the key areas outlined in the Education Sector Strategy (2013-2020) which in turn is linked to the government's strategic objective of achieving a well-educated human resource base. Specifically, improving access and equity to education, improvements to the quality of education, and improving governance and promoting partnerships. Within the framework of this updated Education Sector Strategy, the Government of Cameroon has requested assistance to redress geographical disparities by focusing support on the ZEP areas, and to focus on raising the quality of service delivery with a view to improving learning outcomes in the first three grades of primary school. The choice of focusing on the early grades of primary schooling is based on the results of the 2011 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) financed by AFD, several rounds of PASEC results for Cameroon, and the findings and recommendations of the last GPE project implementation completion report. A poor foundation in literacy and numeracy is known to have severe and lifelong negative effects on human capital development.

18. Based on discussions with the Government, these objectives are to be achieved through: (i) continued support for the contract teachers program, with priority allocation of teachers to the ZEP areas and improvement of teacher on-the-job performance; (ii) provision of teaching and learning materials for all primary schools; (iii) support for raising service delivery standards in the ZEP areas through classroom construction and rehabilitation; and (iv) building institutional and technical capacity for monitoring and evaluation in the sector with a focus on systematic assessment of student learning. The latter will build upon and further develop the institutional foundation set up through the previous GPE project.

The objective of the proposed project is also directly aligned with the GPE objectives and priorities.

19. There is government commitment to these priorities: (i) free primary education that is mandatory for all children; (ii) promotion of girls’ education; (iii) improvements to gender parity; and (iv) promotion of learning achievements through improvements in the quality of education leading to literacy and numeracy. The interventions in the ZEP and other disadvantages areas would in part address the needs of out-of-school children.

Government ownership.

20. In March 2013 the proposed project interventions were determined jointly by the government's technical team, the coordinating agencies (UNICEF and UNESCO), and the World Bank team as the Supervising Entity for the GPE program design and implementation. The proposed interventions were reviewed and endorsed by the Steering Committee for the education sector that is headed by MINEPAT. There is full ownership of the proposed project components.

**Relationship to CAS**

21. The proposed project is closely aligned with the second strategic theme of the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Cameroon dated 2012 that focuses on improving service delivery as a means to reduce poverty. For the education sector, the CAS emphasizes improving the efficacy and accountability of education services. More generally, the CAS also foresees supporting local development, by building greater capacity for local governance. The other strategic theme of the CAS is improving competitiveness, for which this project will contribute through its focus on improving learning outcomes.
22. The proposed operation is also in line with the World Bank’s Africa Regional Strategy. The project would aim to improve service delivery and governance and build public sector capacity.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)
The proposed development objective is to improve basic education service delivery and learning outcomes.

Key Results (From PCN)
The proposed PDO-level results indicators are as follows:

1. To Improve service delivery:

   Outcome Indicators:
   (i) Increase in number of trained contract teachers in the ZEP and other disadvantaged areas (zones difficiles) in the country.
   (ii) Rehabilitated schools in the ZEP and other disadvantaged areas (zones difficiles) that have increased learning time (time on task).
   (iii) Pupil-textbook ratio in primary grades 1-3 (language, mathematics) in all primary schools

2. Improve learning outcomes:

   Outcome Indicators:
   (i) Share of students in the ZEP and other disadvantaged areas (zones difficiles) that meet certain reading and mathematics benchmarks based on EGRA and EGMA.

3. Improve equity in basic education:

   Outcome Indicator:
   (i) Increase in female basic school enrollment in the ZEP and other disadvantaged areas (zones difficiles)
   (ii) Increase in number of female trained contract teachers in the ZEP and other disadvantaged areas (zones difficiles)

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

23. The indicative allocation from the Global Partnership for Education for the project is US$53.30 million. No co-financing is anticipated at this time. It is proposed that the project be implemented over a period of four years. The proposed project components would be as follows:

Component 1. Improve Teacher and Textbook Availability in Primary Grades 1-3 (estimated cost US$33 million)

Sub-component 1.1. Strengthen the Contract Teachers Program with a focus on two-three disadvantaged areas in each region (US$25 million)
24. The project would extend a final phase of support for the Contract Teachers Program (CTP) by financing a portion of the CTP salaries on the condition that government recruits more contract teachers intra-regionally or converts existing maîtres des parents to contract teacher cadre, with specific recruitment targets defined for two-three most disadvantaged areas in each region, and for the share of female teachers. New CTP recruits will have to be trained teachers as per the existing requirements of that program. The sub-component would also include strengthening of teacher quality under the CTP and address teacher absenteeism and on-the-job performance. Finally, the project would help to strengthen the CTP administration further, a process already initiated under the previous GPE project (then EFA-FTI) which also provided support for the CTP. This sub-component builds on the strong foundation set up through the previous project.

25. Cameroon has demonstrated its ability and willingness to pursue a results-based financing approach through the previous EFA-FTI project. There is every reason to build on the reform that is already in place, and consider a disbursement linked indicator to finance contract teachers’ salaries. Continued financing for one more phase would be based on: (i) an analysis of the continued relevance, strengths and weaknesses of the CTP; (ii) identification of opportunities for strengthening teacher quality, reducing absenteeism, and raising on-the-job performance; (iii) addressing the internal control issues raised in the Special Audit undertaken for the previous GPE financing of the CTP; (iv) an institutional assessment of the management capacity of the CTP; and (v) an assessment of the CTP attrition and redistribution issues. A convenant is proposed to be introduced in legal agreement to prevent the horizontal attrition of teachers to other sub-sectors of education.

Sub-component 1.2. Provide teaching and learning materials for Primary Grades 1-3 (US$8 million)

26. This sub-component would focus on the competitive procurement and distribution of teaching and learning materials in basic French, English (and/or civic education and health), and Mathematics for primary grades 1-3. This is in keeping with the project objective of improving learning outcomes, and the choice to focus on early grade reading and numeracy and application of EGRA and EGMA in Component 3. One of two options will be selected: (i) “Buying the result” by MINFI leveraging the financing of contract teacher salaries with the purchase and distribution of teaching and learning materials by MINEDUB; or (ii) adopting a traditional SIL approach to teaching and learning materials procurement. Based on lessons from earlier projects, a rapid results initiative (RRI) approach could be put in place for the signing of the contracts and for the distribution of the teaching and learning materials. This latter option would result in getting embroiled in the contentious textbooks market in the country. Furthermore, in the absence of a sound teaching and learning materials policy could result in no disbursements for this sub-component. Textbooks would be provided to all public schools in Cameroon, not just the disadvantaged areas.

Component 2. Rehabilitate and Expand Schools and Learning Time in disadvantages areas (estimated cost US$14 million)

27. There are severe classroom shortages in the disadvantaged areas in each region, where insufficient schooling infrastructure has led to schools resorting to operating with double shifts. This has contributed to decreasing the time on task for students. This Component would finance the rehabilitation and potential expansion of primary schools in the disadvantaged areas, with a focus on schools that are operating with double shift due to classroom shortages. The focus on the disadvantaged areas will also help reduce geographical inequities in the endowment of school
infrastructure in Cameroon. A similar approach would be taken for the rehabilitation/construction of separate latrines and water points for girls and boys, and to improve housing for contract teachers. This aspect is considered to be one of the more efficient options to reduce teacher attrition in the disadvantaged areas (zones difficiles). Tables and chairs will be commensurate with the numbers of rehabilitated schools/classrooms and student enrollments.

Component 3. Strengthen institutional capacity for monitoring service delivery and learning outcomes (estimated cost US$6.3 million)

28. The project would support setting up the technical and institutional capacity for improved monitoring and evaluation of sector performance, with a focus on monitoring of student learning through more systematic student assessment. Also, the component would focus on monitoring service delivery and on addressing some of the governance issues in the sector.

Sub-component 3.1. Develop a national assessment framework and test students in grades 1-3 (US $1.3 million)

29. The project would support the development of a national assessment framework to encompass formative evaluation of student learning achievement. Currently, there is no national assessment framework and the only systematic learning assessment consists of the high-stakes exams at the end of the primary and secondary cycles. As a start, the focus of the national assessment framework would be on primary education, given the learning crises in the early grades and the focus on grades 1-3 in other project components. The project would also provide financing for carrying out national-level EGRA and EGMA assessments of grades 1-3 students during the project period. With funding from AFD, a baseline EGRA was carried out in 2010, with results available in 2011. Several rounds of the regional assessment PASEC have also been carried out in Cameroon, with the latest results published in 2011. A baseline EGMA does not exist at this time, but may be carried out during the project preparation period with financing from development partner agencies.

Sub-component 3.2. Strengthen the Education Management Information System (US$2 million)

30. The project would finance the institutional development and strengthening of the EMIS at the MINEDUB. The goal would be to ensure that the processes of data collection, verification, and collation become more systematic and lead to the production of more reliable statistical data that can better inform decision-making and sector management.

Sub-component 3.3. Monitoring governance and service delivery indicators (US$2.0 million)

31. As a means of better identifying service delivery weaknesses, the proposal is to undertake a school mapping exercise and linking this to the relatively well functioning tableau de bord (introduced through a previous project) to capture the key indicators at schools level. There are high country-level risks with respect to governance issues in the education sector. The project would finance the monitoring and evaluation of a Governance and Anti-Corruption (GAC) Action Plan, including rolling audits of the project components and sub-components, financing for external verification agencies, third party audits, and rapid results initiatives during project implementation in order to ensure that it is on track and that there is value for money. Further, a public expenditure tracking survey (PETS) would be undertaken to determine how much of the primary education financing is actually reaching the service delivery points (primary schools), and assess social
accountability measures to determine to what extent feedback from the school level is taken into consideration at the central level. Finally, the application of a Rapid Results Initiative to complete required bidding documents and focus on project implementation right from the time the project becomes effective.

Sub-component 3.4. Background studies and strategies (US$1.0 million).

32. The objective of this sub-component would be link skills development at ECD and primary education levels and to elevate the sectoral level discussions to create appropriate human capital to promote growth and improve competitiveness. The proposed GPE project would support four key studies: (i) education fundamental to include ECD, primary and lower secondary education; (ii) handicapped and disadvantaged children and strategies to address the issues; (iii) a strategy for skills development; and (iv) a full-fledged strategy for higher education.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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V. Financing (in USD Million)

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VI. Contact point

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