

### Terms of Reference

<i>Title:</i>	International Consultancy to provide technical support to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan in introduction of blended learning approach to teacher pre-service and in-service programmes.
<i>Consultancy Mode:</i>	National <input type="checkbox"/> International <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Type of Contract:</i>	Consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Mode of Selection:</i>	Competitive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single Source <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Location</i>	<i>Home-based, given ongoing COVID-19 Restrictions, with scope for in-country travel if restrictions are lifted. (tentatively two in-country visits between October-December 2021 and April-May 2022 subject to confirmation based on detailed workplan)</i>
<i>Duration of Contract:</i>	1 July 2021 – 30 May 2022

## 1. Background

Quality and relevance of learning opportunities is a key concern in the Republic of Tajikistan for all students, particularly for girls. Despite high rates of enrolment, comparable data on learning outcomes is missing due to lack of standardized national assessment, low qualifications of teachers particularly in relation to active teaching methods, lack of ICT and promotion of 21st century skills constitute a major challenge impacting on the learning outcomes of children and adolescents, along with lack of conducive learning environments.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the challenges related to limited access to technology and connectivity, as Tajikistan was among the countries where the education system was not able to ensure interactive distance learning. Despite the fact that schools in the country were closed only for two months (announced as school extended vacation), the learning of the children was impacted. While there are no cases of Covid -19 registered in Tajikistan since January 2021 and school closure is not expected in the near future, there is a clear realization by the MoES and other education stakeholders of the opportunities offered by the use of technology in education for better access, (including during emergencies’) and improving quality education.

Building on best international practices, UNICEF Tajikistan is supporting the MoES in introducing digital learning to address the challenges the country is encountering. Within the framework of LearnIn initiative launched by UNICEF ECARO, UNICEF will assist the MoES to leverage and scale up existing digital learning activities to support the education system in providing stable, flexible, effective, inclusive and safe learning opportunities primary and secondary school-aged children, especially the most vulnerable. These will include: 1) accessible online and offline learning platforms; 2) quality, curriculum-aligned, relevant, and competency-based content; 3) teacher upskilling and ongoing support to strengthen quality, inclusive, and personalized pedagogy; 4) internet connectivity and device procurement to

expand access to quality learning, even when schools are closed; and 5) support to learners and engagement of youth. While there is no intention that digital learning will fully replace the traditional way of learning in different settings, it is hoped that its introduction will initiate conversations about the use various innovative modalities for learning and professional development.

While interventions are ongoing in relation to development of platforms, ensuring internet connectivity and device procurement, UNICEF is seeking an international consulting company to offer specific expertise in two key areas: a) designing of blended learning content and b) upgrading teacher preparation and professional development systems through introduction of blended learning approaches and in-classroom continuous support system.

## 2. Purpose and specific objectives

UNICEF and other development partners are extensively supporting the MoES in introducing blended learning modalities in education through development of digital platforms for students, teachers and parents. While new platforms have been piloted, the MoES and other education stakeholders require advanced capacity building in designing quality blended learning content and courses for various education stakeholders (students, teachers, school administration and education policymakers, parents and etc.). One of the key tasks of this consultancy is to build the capacity of various education stakeholders, including MoES and their affiliated agencies, CSOs and representatives of other organizations in designing quality blended learning content.

Additionally, UNICEF is planning to support the strengthening of teacher preparation and professional development systems using blended learning approach, further replacing current workshop-based, face-to-face teacher training programmes with continuous professional development and in-classroom support. In 2020, the MoES endorsed the Teacher Competency Framework which determines which professional values, knowledge, and skills the teachers must have to deliver quality education services to all children. It also outlines the competencies of the teachers to guide their continuous professional development. This includes ability to read and critically engage with professional literature, educational research and policy, engagement in reflective practice to develop and advance career-long professional learning and expertise, being updated with educational research.

The National Education Development Strategy for the period until 2030 (NEDS 2030) acknowledges that the current teacher preparation and professional development system does not respond to the needs of the teachers and fails to provide them with meaningful learning and development opportunities. The curriculum of the pedagogical institutions is outdated and fails to respond to the needs of new competency based-education reform. At the same time, the only institution providing professional development opportunities to Tajik teachers is the Republican Institute for Inservice Teacher Training with six branches across the country. The Institute is only able to cover 20% of the teachers per year and its curriculum focuses on provision of subject specific trainings, lacking flexibility both in the way they are designed and in terms of their delivery. The institute uses face to face trainings (6 and 12 days) as the only mode of delivery of their trainings, which does not provide full support needed by teachers throughout the process of learning and reflection, thus impacting the level of the pedagogical improvement expected as a result of the trainings.

Therefore, NEDS 2030 sets “creation of an effective and flexible system of professional development (i.e. training and retraining) of teachers and other workers in general secondary

education in accordance with principles of inclusive education” as one of its key priority measures.

The reform intends to achieve the following:

- improve the content, forms and methods of teacher professional development
- transition to a three-year system of advanced training for educational workers develop teacher professional development programs using distance and blended learning approaches
- strengthen the teacher mentoring system to provide support in their professional development and improving their teaching practice

The international practice and local pilots have demonstrated the benefit of blended learning approach in teacher preparation and professional development. It is expected that through introduction of evidence-based blended learning approaches, the content and delivery of teacher trainings could be become more effective and efficient with elements of embedded support, practice and reflection. The second task of this consultancy will include a) analysis of the current teacher preparation and professional development system and provision of recommendations to upgrading the system, including in policies and certification; c) closely work and guide teacher preparation and professional development institutions in using evidence-based, blended learning approaches for delivery of their trainings; and b) building capacities in designing interactive content, creating and maintaining community of learning, provision of mentoring support during teachers’ learning process; c) support the experts from relevant institutions in designing and testing specific courses on mentoring and inclusive education.

### ***Specific objectives***

UNICEF and other development partners are extensively supporting the MoES in introducing blended learning modalities in education through development of digital platforms for students, teachers, and parents. While new platforms have been piloted, the MoES and other education stakeholders require advanced capacity building in designing quality blended learning content and courses for various education stakeholders (students, teachers, school administration and education policymakers, parents and etc.).

Additionally, UNICEF is planning to support the strengthening of teacher preparation and professional development systems using blended learning approach, further replacing current workshop-based, face-to-face teacher training programmes with continuous professional development and in-classroom support. In 2020, the MoES endorsed the Teacher Competency Framework which determines which professional values, knowledge, and skills the teachers must have to deliver quality education services to all children. It also outlines the competencies of the teachers to guide their continuous professional development. This includes ability to read and critically engage with professional literature, educational research and policy, engagement in reflective practice to develop and advance career-long professional learning and expertise, being updated with educational research.

The National Education Development Strategy for the period until 2030 (NEDS 2030) acknowledges that the current teacher preparation and professional development system does not respond to the needs of the teachers and fails to provide them with meaningful learning and development opportunities. The curriculum of the pedagogical institutions is outdated and fails to respond to the needs of new competency based-education reform. At the same time, the only institution providing professional development opportunities to Tajik teachers is the

Republican Institute for Inservice Teacher Training with six branches across the country. The Institute is only able to cover 20% of the teachers per year and its curriculum focuses on provision of subject specific trainings, lacking flexibility both in the way they are designed and in terms of their delivery. The institute uses face to face trainings (6 and 12 days) as the only mode of delivery of their trainings, which does not provide full support needed by teachers throughout the process of learning and reflection, thus impacting the level of the pedagogical improvement expected as a result of the trainings.

Therefore, NEDS 2030 sets “creation of an effective and flexible system of professional development (i.e. training and retraining) of teachers and other workers in general secondary education in accordance with principles of inclusive education” as one of its key priority measures.

The reform intends to achieve the following:

- improve the content, forms and methods of teacher professional development;
- transition to a three-year system of advanced training for educational workers; develop teacher professional development programs using distance and blended learning approaches;
- strengthen the teacher mentoring system to provide support in their professional development and improving their teaching practice;

The international practice and local pilots have demonstrated the benefit of blended learning approach in teacher preparation and professional development. It is expected that through introduction of evidence-based blended learning approaches, the content and delivery of teacher trainings could be become more effective and efficient with elements of embedded support, practice and reflection. This will be done through a) analysis of the current teacher preparation and professional development system and provision of recommendations to upgrading the system, including in policies and certification; b) building capacities in designing interactive content, creating and maintaining community of learning, provision of mentoring support during teachers’ learning process; c) support the experts from relevant institutions in designing and testing specific courses on mentoring and inclusive education.

### **3. Scope of the review (Description of the assignment)**

**The key tasks of this consultancy will include:**

- Conduct a review of current teacher preparation and professional development system, including existing frameworks, curriculum, modalities of its delivery, policy and regulatory documents, certification and provide recommendations(mapping) on mainstreaming blended learning within the system.
- Conduct a review of current functionalities related to teacher professional development in established digital platforms supported by UNICEF and Development Partners.
- Develop content for workshops/courses on building the capacity of various education stakeholders (MoES and affiliated agencies staff engaged in development of various digital content, CSOs, Parental organizations) in basics of designing blended learning content in line with LearnIn regional approach and Initiative.
- Conduct series of workshops on designing blended learning content with focus on pedagogy of self-paced and self-regulated learning for a) various education stakeholders (short-term) and b) for teacher preparation and professional development systems (long-term with elements of ongoing support incorporated).

- Provide ongoing support to selected experts from teacher preparation and professional development system in designing blended learning courses, including one on Inclusive Education and mentoring. This task will be based on the review of existing resources in the region.
- Develop quality assurance standards for blended learning courses implemented at national level and ensure those are applied to content developed by ITTI and pedagogical higher institutions.
- Participate in and facilitate advocacy events to introduce blended learning as one of most efficient and effective ways of building the competencies of teachers within the framework of LearnIn regional approach and initiative.
- Guide the testing and revision of developed content in 30 project schools
- Provide recommendations on mainstreaming the approach within the overall teacher support system, specifically in relation to improving the existing platforms to include necessary functionalities as well as trainers' skills to provide ongoing support.
- Provide recommendations to create linkages between the existing platform and teacher professional development database, including the assessment and certification of courses.
- Ensure ongoing monitoring, documenting and evidence generation for scaling up the newly introduced approach.

To ensure this process is successful, they are expected to closely work with a number of experts and organizations within the framework of existing initiatives such as:

- Liaising with national ICT experts working in the development of national teaching and learning platforms, by providing key recommendations on strengthening their ICT competencies, especially in relation to the use of blended learning approach. In addition, expertise is required to provide technical suggestions in relation to functions and requirements of the Teacher Professional Development blended learning platform to ensure that it responds to the needs of the institutes in delivery of their content and learning support.
- Liaising with national experts engaged in development of courses/programmes through providing practical recommendations on regular basis for improvement of their content and design.
- Liaising with national experts engaged in development of in-classroom teacher support system to ensure that the blended learning courses have in-built support to teachers during their learning processes.
- Liaising with UNICEF appointed company tasked to define the ICT equipment needs and development of national roadmap on digital learning. This includes technical expertise and recommendations on teacher preparation and professional development systems in relation to ICT equipment needed to introduce blended learning. Additional recommendations will be expected to the National Roadmap on ICT concerning scaling up blended learning.
- Liaising with experts working on designing the database for Teacher Professional Development system to provide recommendations on indicators and data in relation to the use of blended learning programmes to ensure the two platforms are linked and feed into each other.
- Liaising with other experts from local and international organizations in areas related to blended learning.

#### 4. Methodology

The consultancy will include desk review and analysis of current situation, development of training materials and ongoing support to the key people. The detailed methodology will be proposed by the company covering all the relevant areas of intervention.

#### 5. Work plan

The assignment will be carried out in 168 days, spread over a period ranging from 1 July 2021 to 30 May 2022. The final products of this consultancy will include the following deliverables:

#### 6. Deliverables and payment schedule

#	Deliverable	Number of days	Timeline	Payment schedule)	Location
1	Approved inception report (includes analysis of current teacher preparation and professional development systems and possible use of established digital platforms, coordination with existing national initiatives and in-country expertise available)	15	20 July 2021	25 %	Home-based
2	Approved detailed workplan	3	20 July 2021		Home-based
3	Training package for building the capacity of various education stakeholders on standards of blended content design	15	15 September 2021		Home-based
4	Analytical report and recommendations for mainstreaming Blended Learning within continuous Teacher Professional Development and in-classroom support systems, including presentation and feedback received by MoES and development partners of the Development Coordination Council	15	15 November 2021		Home-based
5	At least 50 education stakeholders trained on basics of blended learning	10	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2021		In-country

6	Training package and a set of workshops for building the capacity of teacher preparation and professional development experts (with ongoing support incorporated) (at least 50 experts)	30	30 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	15%	Home-based/In-Country
7	Courses on Inclusive education and Mentoring developed, tested in 30 pilot schools with schoolteachers as well as students of pre-service teacher training institutes, in blended learning modality.	45	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	55 %	Home-based/ in-country
8	Quality assurance standards for blended learning courses developed and piloted focusing on 30 pilot schools including monitoring system for data collection on impact on teaching and learning.	15	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2022		Home-based
9	A set of recommendations for introducing blended learning approach within the context of in-classroom teacher training support and its linkages to the current digital platforms established by MoES.	15	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2022		Home-based
10	Approved report with recommendations on further scaling of the approach within national Teacher Professional Development and school-support systems. This will include presentation to and feedback received by MoES and development partners of the Development Coordination Council.	5	30 May 2022	5%	Home-based
		168			

**Note: Due to COVID-19, the work and deliverables are subject to change. Consultant need to be flexible to adjust to any unforeseen adjustments that might occur during the implementation.**

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/output is incomplete, not delivered, or for failure to meet deadlines.

## 7. Management and supervision

*Supervisor: Chief Education*

*Reporting to: Education Specialist, UNICEF Tajikistan*

## 8. Reporting requirements

Detailed reports and other type of materials (listed below) should be submitted to UNICEF and the MoES in Tajik and Russian languages in word and pdf formats. The reports will be reviewed and feedback provided by UNICEF, relevant institution and where needed by development partners. The company will be required to present the contents and findings of some of the reports to relevant stakeholders, including Local Education Group.

Types of reports to be submitted is described below. The exact number of the reports should be included in the proposed methodology.

- Inception Report
- Desk review of the current situation
- Training materials
- Presentation material
- Workshop/training evaluation report

## 9. Qualification requirements/specialised knowledge/experience required to complete the task

The company is expected to be based in Central Asia/CIS countries. The required qualifications/knowledge include

**Education:** Advanced university degree in the fields of education, with focus on teacher preparation and professional development, use of technology, blended-learning approaches. PhD level in relevant field is an asset.

**Work Experience:** At least 8 years of work experience in a relevant field, with focus on teacher preparation and professional development and blended learning approaches.

**Technical Knowledge:** Strong knowledge of technology in education, with specific focus on teacher preparation and professional development

**Competencies:** Strong ICT, analytical and conceptual thinking. Excellent writing, communication and presentation skills with stakeholders. Ability to work under pressure and commitment to work to tight timeframe. Good writing skills.

**Language:** Fluency in English, knowledge of Russian is an asset.

### Request for submission

- A technical proposal with proposed methodology/approach to managing the project, showing understanding of tasks and work plan (no price information should be contained in the technical proposal).
- A copy of the organization profile.

- The proposed technical team curriculum vitae (CV).
- A sample of previous work undertaken in the last two years
- Financial quote (separate email).

## 10. Evaluation process and methods

The evaluation methodology is based on a highest combined score (based on the 70% technical offer and 30% price weight distribution).

Each interested institution is requested to submit in a one page brief a proposed approach for such assignment along with a copy of the organization profile, the proposed technical team curriculum vitae, expected budget as well as a sample of previous work undertaken in the last two years.

After the opening, each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its financial value price. The proposal with the best overall value, composed of technical merit and price, will be recommended for approval. UNICEF will set up an evaluation panel composed of technical and procurement staff and their conclusions will be forwarded to the internal UNICEF Contracts Review Committee or other relevant approving authority. The evaluation panel will first evaluate each response for compliance with the requirements of this Terms of Reference. Responses deemed not to meet all of the mandatory requirements will be considered non-compliant and rejected at this stage without further consideration. Failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions contained in these Terms of Reference, including provision of all required information, may result in a response or proposal being disqualified from further consideration.

The overall weighting between technical and price evaluation will be based on the predefined criteria. The technical component will account for 70% of the total points allocated and the financial component (commercial evaluation) will account for 30% of the total points allocated.

### Technical evaluation:

The proposals will be evaluated against the following technical criteria:

<b><i>TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION (max. 70 points)</i></b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Overall Response (5)</b>	
Completeness of the proposal and responsiveness to the TOR	5 pts
<b>Capability and Key Personnel (40)</b>	
At least 8 years of relevant experience in teacher preparation and professional development, use of technology, blended-learning approaches, development of blended content and capacity building preferably with experience in Central Asia	10
Demonstrated experience in the conducting analysis, development of training materials for teachers with focus on pedagogy using blended learning modalities, working with government representatives, NGOs and other stakeholders.	10
Strong knowledge of technology in education, analytical and conceptual thinking. Excellent writing, communication and presentation skills with stakeholders	10
Fluency in English, knowledge of Russian, is an asset	10
<b>Proposed Methodology and Approach (25)</b>	

Quality of the proposed methodology, detailed timeline, consultations, analysis methods and presentation. The proposal should detail the proposed approaches based on the TOR requirements.	20 pts
Assessment of key considerations relevant to the task, potential challenges and risks, and proposed mitigation plans	5 pts

Only Proposers obtaining a minimum of 49 points in Technical Criteria evaluation will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

**Commercial evaluation:**

The price/cost of each of the technically compliant proposals shall be considered only after evaluation of the above technical criteria. A maximum 30 point assigned to the financial proposal will be allocated to the lowest financial proposal. All other price proposals will receive scores in inverse proportion according to the following formula:

Score for price proposal A = (Maximum score for price proposal \* Price of lowest priced proposal)/Price of proposal A.

As a result of the financial evaluation, the points of each proposal will be taken into further consideration in the final evaluation.

The bidders should ensure that all pricing information is provided in accordance with the following:

- a) The currency of the proposal shall be in USD for international companies and in Tajik Somoni for the local Proposers and invoicing must be in the same currency.
- b) All prices/rates quoted must be exclusive of all taxes as UNICEF is a tax-exempt organization

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Any request for information or question should be forwarded to [tad-procurement@unicef.org](mailto:tad-procurement@unicef.org)