

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 strengthening in-classroom support system
<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>	30 September 2021 – 30 September 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, 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.

According to current National Education Strategy 2021-2030, education reforms in the country are aimed at “upgrading of general education content on the ground of transfer from knowledge-based to competency-based education model”. The Mid-Term Education Plan 2021-2023 puts forward a theory of change that should result in all subjects in all grades being taught based on the new competency-based curriculum. In addition, all teachers should possess the skills required for the transition to the competency-based curriculum and new teaching, and learning materials supporting the implementation of the curriculum are to be developed and printed.

Currently, the Government of Tajikistan continues to prioritize strengthening the competency-based approach in education through revision of the curriculum, strengthening of teacher professional development and support system and reforming the assessment system. In 2020, the Government of Tajikistan has also partnered with UNICEF within the framework of “Support to National Education Development Strategy for the period until 2030” project, jointly implemented with the Islamic Development Bank and Global Partnership for Education (herewith referred to as the project). This project is aimed at supporting the curriculum reform through the following activities: 1) stocktaking of current achievements; 2) introduction of blended learning to teacher preparation and professional development system and design of training courses for teachers and other education stakeholders; 3) revision of Math and

Language curriculum and design of language materials, 4) introduction of new formative and summative assessment strategies and 5) strengthening of in-classroom support system.

International and national expertise has been mobilized to conduct the stocktaking exercise, introduce blended learning, revise curriculum and design instructional language materials. With this ToR, UNICEF is seeking international expertise to support the review and strengthening of teacher in-classroom support system.

2. Purpose and specific objectives

Within the framework of the project, in November 2020 UNICEF initiated stocktaking of all Competency Based Education (CBE) related materials. In June 2021, the findings of the stocktaking exercise were presented to key stakeholders followed by a reflection exercise on the achievements of the reform and further steps to be taken to improve the quality of CBE implementation. A baseline has been initiated to understand how the CBE has been implemented in schools and classrooms and whether the teachers have been sufficiently supported during the roll-out of the reform. However, previous analysis (EGRA, 2019, Baseline Study by University of Central Asia, 2020) and the findings of the stocktaking report and reflection exercise demonstrated the weak link between the theory of CBE and its implementation. Issues such as lack of common understanding of CBE in curriculum documents, insufficient training and mentoring support to teachers, absence of alignment of the teacher preparation, professional development and mentoring, as well as learning assessment systems with CBE approach have been raised as key concerns.

This assignment plays a key role in creating linkages between all components of the project and establishing connections with schools and teachers. It also emphasises the importance of involvement of teachers in the design of the curriculum and learning materials and establishing mechanisms for feedback from schools to curriculum developers.

The tasks of this assignment are twofold:

1. Ensuring coordination of various components of the project building on completed baseline assessment; and
2. Development and testing of a new in-classroom support system in 30 pilot schools.

The first category of tasks will focus on establishing clear connections between in-classroom support and other components of the project, including liaising with national and international experts appointed by UNICEF working on teacher preparation and professional development systems as well as curriculum support. This will include ensuring effective communication between various teams engaged in implementation of different components of the project, as well as development of frameworks, organization of regular meetings and presentation of the overall progress of the project (Big Picture) to the MoES and key education stakeholders.

The second category of tasks will include: a) review of the current in-classroom support system and the functions of all institutions engaged in provision of mentoring support to teachers followed by recommendations for creating a more effective and efficient system in line with CBE ; b) testing of best practices related to in-classroom support, including development of new tools and approaches and c) establishing a feedback mechanism between curriculum developers and teachers;

The key tasks of this assignment will include:

- Ensure effective coordination between various components of the projects through
 - Developing and implementing a framework for efficient and effective communication between the teams involved in the implementation of various project components
 - Preparing and running participatory workshops for teams involved in the implementation of various project components (on a bi-monthly basis)
 - Preparing and running workshops on project progress for MoES and DCC/LEG (once every three months)
 - Establish links between the in-classroom support system and other projects components through:
 - Developing and implementing a framework for testing newly developed materials in project pilot schools
 - Developing and implementing a framework for including best practice from the project pilot schools into new instructional materials
 - Developing and implementing a framework for integrating in-service blended courses into the teacher support system
 - Proposing suggestions for adapting current digital learning platforms to the needs of the in-classroom support system
- Development and testing of the in-classroom support system through
 - Reviewing the currently existing mentoring systems in Tajikistan and the functions of various institutions engaged in supporting teachers
 - Reviewing the offer of blended teacher-training courses that can be used for supporting the in-classroom support system
 - Providing and model recommendations for strengthening the in-classroom teacher support system
 - Developing a set of instruments for mentors to be used in the process of teacher supervision
 - Preparing and facilitating capacity building workshops for future mentors (in a blended format)
 - Providing support to in-country workshops for the development and testing of developed instruments
 - Collecting examples of “best practice” in pilot schools in different formats (video examples of classroom interaction, feedback to pupils’ written work, etc.) to be shared with other teachers
 - Organising a conference for exchanging best practice among teachers and mentors

3. Methodology

While there are few agencies responsible for provision of support and mentoring to teachers and schools, including Inservice Teacher Training Institutes (ITTIs), Republican Training and Methodological Center (RTMC), its Community-based Methodological Units (CBMU) and school-based methodological units, and Agency for Quality Education under the President, their functions are not clearly defined and they all go to schools with the same “inspections”. This assignment will include in-depth review of the functions of these agencies, comparing the findings to the results of the baseline at schools and proposing recommendations for improvement of the system to ensure these institutions are providing support and not constantly “inspecting” teachers and schools. Furthermore, a set of tools and approaches will be designed and tested to assist these institutions with particular focus on RTMC, CBMUs and MUs to provide ongoing support to teachers in implementation of CBE. To ensure that the content

developed within the framework of this project is relevant to teachers, the established support and mentoring mechanisms will be used for receiving teachers' feedback as well as serve as a platform for testing the suggested approaches and content. It is envisaged that this will create a culture in which key institutions involved in development of curriculum and teacher training courses engage more with teachers and consider them as partners in CBE reform, and not only as recipients and deliverers of the content and approaches developed.

This assignment will build on the ongoing reform supported by various development partners including UNICEF, Tajikistan. The consultancy will include desk review and analysis of current situation, development and testing of frameworks, tools and training materials, and ongoing support to the affiliated agencies and education stakeholders. The detailed methodology will be proposed by the company covering all the relevant areas of intervention.

4. Ethical considerations

Any review conducted within the framework of this project will be guided by UNEG Ethical Guidelines¹ and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards². Should children be involved in the data collection or otherwise, ethical clearance should be sought by the review team. The common guiding principles will be used to ensure ethical safety during the review process:

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Informed consent
- Harm and benefits
- Conflict of interest

The reviewers will explain to the participants the purpose and use of the review; they will also make it explicitly clear to the participants that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw at any moment. Throughout the process, the reviewers should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders.

5. Work plan

The assignment will be carried out in 200 days, spread over a period ranging from 30 September 2021 to 30 September 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 framework for ensuring coordination between various components of the project	5	By 15 th October 2021	10%	Home-based
2	Approved report of the functional review of in-classroom support with	20	By 20 th December 2021		In-country

¹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

² UNICEF PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS, April 2015

	recommendations on strengthening it				
3	A set of instruments developed for mentors to be used for teacher support	25	By 10 th January 2022	15%	Home-based/In-Country
7	A library of examples of “best practices”	6	By 10 th February 2022		Home-based
8	Training package for mentors (in blended format) (to be done in close collaboration with international consultancy on blended learning (including Program materials for 24 H teacher training and 48 H supervisor training developed)	20	By 21 st February	10%	Home-based
9	A conference on teacher support organized	10	By 10 th April		Home-based
5	Frameworks for testing and embedding teacher support and mentoring into teacher professional development system (at least 3, including Supervision model/methodology;)	25	By 10 th May 2022	10%	Home-based
10	Quarterly reports periodic on implementation of relevant project components based on developed M&E tools	4	By first week of every quarter	55% (could be paid in parts upon completion of components of deliverables)	Home-based
2	Workshops for project teams (at least 6)	30	By 15 th August 2022		Home-based and in-country
4	Workshops for MoES and other key stakeholders on the progress of the project (at least 3)	10	By 15 th August 2022		Home-based and in-country
	Workshops/Consultation meetings with RTMC and its staff on mentorship (including 120 teachers complete 72 H training; v) 15 mentors trained) with	45	By 30 th August 2022		Home-based and in-country

	the focus on target schools in Khatlon and Dushanbe				
--	---	--	--	--	--

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.

The consultancy will be evaluated against submitted deliverables not the process of the achieving those. The deliverables will have to be submitted in two languages, English and Russian (unless agreed otherwise between all parties)

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

All reports and materials (listed below) should be submitted to UNICEF and the MoES in English and Russian languages in word and pdf formats. The reports and materials 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 and materials to relevant stakeholders, including Local Education Group.

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

- Inception report (including detailed workplan and detailed deliverables)
- Desk review of in-classroom support system
- Workshop/training evaluation report
- Frameworks (described in the tasks and deliverables section)
- Tools and detailed description of proposed approaches
- Periodic reports on implementation of deliverables

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

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

The required qualifications/knowledge include

Education: Consultants with advanced university degree in the field of education, with focus on teacher preparation, professional development and mentoring systems, curriculum development, including textbooks and blended learning

Work Experience: At least 8 years of work experience in a relevant field, with focus on above mentioned areas and education policy development

Technical Knowledge: Strong knowledge of teacher professional development and mentoring system, curriculum and blended learning.

Competencies: Strong coordination skills, analytical and conceptual thinking. Ability to work with large teams and guide policy discussions. 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).

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:

TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION (max. 70 points)	70
Overall Response (5)	

Completeness of the proposal and responsiveness to the TOR	5 pts
Capability and Key Personnel (40)	
Consultants with advanced university degree in the field of education, with focus on teacher preparation, professional development and mentoring systems, curriculum development, including textbooks and blended learning	10
At least 8 years of work experience in a relevant field, with focus on above mentioned areas and education policy development	10
Strong knowledge of teacher professional development and mentoring system, curriculum and blended learning.	10
Fluency in English, knowledge of Russian, is an asset	10
Proposed Methodology and Approach (25)	
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 dushanbe@unicef.org