

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR LOCAL CONSULTANCY

Senior Expert for the Comprehensive Sectoral Analysis of Pre-Primary Education

Individual Consultant is expected to perform this assignment remotely (home based) with possible field missions as required.

Duty Station: Yerevan, Armenia

Supervisor: Education Specialist, Education Officer (GPE), Team Leader

Time-frame: from mid-June to mid-December (approx. 6 months)

Purpose of Activity/Assignment:

The aim of the assignment is to support improvement of Armenia's pre-primary education system through comprehensive system analysis and policy recommendations. Under this assignment, the Senior Expert, working within a team of dedicated experts composed of one Senior and two Junior Experts and guided by Team Leader, will be responsible for collecting the data and analyzing Armenia's pre-primary education practices to generate evidence-based policy recommendations for improvement of pre-primary education system in Armenia. This assessment envisages both secondary review of existing data, desk-research and primary data collection/analysis.

These activities will contribute to the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Target 4.2. which requires states to "ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education." At the global level, the agenda around the SDG 4 to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by 2030, has reinforced a focus on learning assessment to gain data on learning that allow to establish and monitor education quality and learning progress.

The analysis shall target the following components of pre-primary education system: curriculum implementation, workforce development, family and community engagement, and enabling environment. The analysis shall be implemented based on Early Childhood Education (ECE) Accelerator jointly developed by UNICEF and the GPE. More specifically, it should follow the contextualized methodology and questionnaires of the modules 2 (curriculum implementation), 3 (workforce development), 4 (family and community engagement), 6 (enabling environment) of the Pre-primary Subsector Analysis Tool based on and operationalizing the Build to Last conceptual framework. Data shall be gathered through key stakeholder interviews and desk research of key sectoral primary analyses including the ones carried out by the Ministry's Projects Implementation Unit.

Key stakeholders of the assignment are the government line ministries, namely the Ministries of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MoTAI), MESCS, sub-national and local authorities, UNICEF, EU and dedicated CSOs. The knowledge generated by the study should be used by UNICEF Armenia to inform and amplify its future activities and projects in the country and will also be used by other national stakeholders to further refine the quality, cohesiveness and timeliness of policies in the field of general education.

Scope of Work:

Context

Access to equitable quality pre-primary (early childhood/preschool) education (3-6 years of age) for all children is fundamental to promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing.

Majority of Armenia's educational reforms over the last three decades have focused on the general, vocational and higher education. The pre-primary education in Armenia is regulated by the Law on Preschool Education (2005) which was significantly amended in 2020 with release of the new Law on Preschool Education. Being part of the wider early childhood development context, the pre-primary sector is further underpinned by a variety of other laws, policies or strategies. A number of studies over the last 5-10 years have focused on Armenia's pre-primary education as a separate sector itself (not as initial stage of the general education sector) including the Assessment of Sectoral Policies and Programs through the World Bank's System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER) analysis (2012); Assessment of Access to Preschool Education Services (World Vision Armenia, 2017); Assessment of the Financial and Legal Aspects of the National Preschool Education Programs, Policies and Strategies (UNICEF, 2008); Cost-benefit Analysis of Alternative Pre-school Education Services in Consolidated Multi-settlement Communities (UNICEF, 2018) and Diagnostic Report of Early Childhood Development Services (World bank, 2019). These analyses along with the primary data they utilize provide a number of important insights. Meanwhile, there's lack of comprehensive insights on the curriculum (formal or non-formal) and its implementation; workforce development; family and community engagement, and deeper analysis of the enabling environment (ministerial leadership, policies and legislation, financing and public demand).

In 2021 the Government approved Armenia's new Law on Preschool Education and National Curriculum for General Education, to implement the provisions of which in full, the MoESCS jointly with its newly established National Center for Educational Development and Innovation (NCEDI) intends to implement an analysis of the pre-primary sector.

Responsibilities in the Team

The Senior Expert will be responsible for contributing to the development and planning of the work of technical working group composed of one Senior and two Junior Experts to be supervised by the Team Leader, with full set of reporting documents adhering to UNICEF quality assurance standards being developed and submitted in a timely manner.

The Consultant will be administering collection of primary data, its duly recording, analysis and reporting, key expert and key informant interviews (KEI, KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with assistance of Junior Experts. The Consultant should support the team in database processing, data management and tabulation, if any. Along with the Team Leader, s/he will also be tasked with participating in regular consultations with main stakeholders, such as members of the Local Education Group, MESCS, NCET, the National Assessment and Testing Center (NATC), NCEDI and other agencies as deemed necessary, as well preparing short memos and presentations for such meetings. S/he will also be responsible for initial preparation of all draft reports, based on the inputs received from Junior Experts.

UNICEF will organize thematic orientation sessions and consultations. This assignment is within the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Education Sector Development Programme Grant - a joint UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports initiative to be implemented during 2021-2022.

Methodology

The study methodology shall follow a mixed-methods approach combining secondary quantitative data review and qualitative methods of data collection to obtain rich insights, address all the objectives of the assignment and to assure triangulation of data sources and data collection methods. The detailed methodology allowing for collection of all required information with detailed sampling strategy, study instruments and analytical approach should be developed by the Team at the end of the inception phase and submitted to UNICEF in a form of a Study Protocol for approval and quality assurance.

The quantitative data should be utilized through secondary review of desk research of key sectoral primary analyses reflecting the state of pre-primary education in the country. The qualitative data should be collected through remote or face-to-face (F2F) stakeholder semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the following target

groups: staff members, principals, board members of pre-school educational institutions, as well as key experts in the domain. Total number of key informant and key expert interviews (KIIs and KEIs) planned for the study is around 8-12 per each target group. Number and structure of FGDs to be discussed and approved during the inception stage of the assignment. Details of sampling approach, sample sizes and recruitment of participants should be developed by the Consultant, presented in the Study Protocol and discussed with UNICEF Armenia team prior to approval.

The final reports should incorporate the main learnings from all stages and provide concrete and accurate policy solutions for the MoESCS to pursue. More information on the technical requirements for each report will be provided to successful candidates.

Ethical Considerations

The assessment approach and data collection and analysis methods should focus on gender and human rights aspects, be responsive and appropriate for analyzing the gender equality, human rights issues, including child rights issues. Gender equality, equity and human rights considerations will be further elaborated by the Consultant and the Team during the inception phase and addressed across the final reports. Ethical dimensions should be taken into consideration by the Team, discussed and measures taken to ensure those. More specifically, prior to conducting interviews the respondents' informed consent should be ensured, age-appropriate language and approaches to data collection involving children should be used. The anonymity and confidentiality of individual data will be protected, and ethical guidelines will be followed as set out by United Nations (UN) Evaluation Group in its standards and norms. Adherence to the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis¹, Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practice for UNICEF Research² and Technical note on Children Participating in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation³ should be ensured by the team.

¹ See UNICEF Procedure for Quality Assurance in Research CF/PD/DRP/2015-002 https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF

² See Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practice for UNICEF Research

³ See Children Participating in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

Work Assignment Overview			
Tasks/Milestone:	Deliverables/Outputs:	Timeline	Estimate Budget
Inception Phase - Support in desk researching and secondary review of data; - Support the Team Leader to develop the Study Protocol, with basic literature review, detailed methodology, instruments, sampling and recruitment of participants, fieldwork approach and quality control mechanism for qualitative interviews; - Adjustments of the methodology as per guidance and comments from UNICEF.	Study Protocol for the inception phase and fieldwork plan in English with detailed implementation plan and methodology including but not limited to: (i) list of assessment programmes to be analysed; (ii) mapping of stakeholders and documents; (iii) implementation plan, (iv) charter of risks and mitigation strategies; (v) list of contextualized Early Childhood Education (ECE) Accelerator-based dimension descriptions, etc.	End of June, 2021	
Fieldwork Phase - Ensure pretesting and finalization of the instruments based on the methodology developed by the study team; - Comprehensive literature review; - Cleaning and comprehensive analysis of the quantitative data provided by the NCET; - Collecting qualitative data through remote KEI/KIIs and FGs; - Data transcription and coding; - Submission of data collection report covering the following pieces: documentation of fieldwork implementation, quality control, final instruments, and transcripts. - Debriefing meeting for UNICEF Armenia on the preliminary findings, testing elements of conclusions.	Comprehensive literature review in Armenian and English (no more than 20 pages) Brief report and validation workshop on desk review and secondary data Documentation of fieldwork implementation, including the full transcripts/audio-files of KEI/KIIs and FGs	Early October, 2021	
Analysis and Reporting - Data further processing and analytics; - Inputs in development of the draft report for UNICEF Armenia review providing data visualization. The	Draft reports in English and Armenian	End of November, 2021	

<p>contents of the report should be developed based on feedback provided after testing and analysis phase of the assignment.</p> <p>- Support in the development of the final report.</p>	<p>Final reports in English and Armenian with recommendations (up to 50 pages, excluding annexes) and an Executive Summary</p>	<p>Mid-December, 2021</p>	
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<p>Minimum Qualifications required:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>Enter Disciplines</p> <p>Advanced university degree in Education, Sociology, Economics, Public Policy, Social Policy or a related field. A PhD degree would be a strong asset.</p>	<p>Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 4 years of documented experience in education (preferably at least 2 years in either research or development of pre-primary education programs or policies); with solid knowledge of international research practice in the field of early childhood education; as well as of Armenia’s national early childhood education sector. • Extensive experience in designing research projects, studies, evaluations and surveys, data analysis and report writing (both in Armenian and in English; links to published research and analytical documents relevant to the TOR to be provided). • No less than 5 years’ experience in qualitative interviewing and FG moderation. • Data management and processing skills through application of SPSS, STATA or other relevant packages. • Proven ability of working in teams and expert groups as well as of working in international and multicultural environments. • Very good communication and presentation skills with government and international organizations. • Fluency in written and spoken English. • Previous experience in working with UN agencies will be an asset.
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<p>Terms of the application:</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of applications is June 10. Applications should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover letter; • CV; • Financial Proposal; • Published research and analytical documents relevant to the TOR; • Examples of published work (paper, abstract, proceedings) in top international conferences and SCOPUS-indexed high-quality journals will be an asset. <p>All qualified applicants should apply online, using the UNICEF E-Recruitment system and following the online application link. Incomplete applications will not be considered.</p> <p>Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures, and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.</p>
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