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TERMS OF REFERENCE

TITLE – *Consultant for strengthening national assessment*

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	New Delhi, India (Remotely)
DURATION OF CONTRACT	1 Month 17 Days

Purpose of Assignment

The consultant will provide independent technical review and advisory support to strengthen the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS) as a national, system-level assessment of school education.

The assignment will focus on:

• reviewing the current PRS approach and relevant previous NAS cycles;

• assessing opportunities to strengthen the technical quality, comparability and inclusiveness of PRS;

• providing recommendations on how PRS can generate more actionable evidence on learning gaps, misconceptions and factors associated with learning outcomes;

• identifying pathways through which PRS evidence can better inform education system improvement, including curriculum, textbooks, teaching-learning processes, teacher development, assessment practices and teaching-learning resources; and

• developing a practical technical pathway for consideration in strengthening the PRS 2027 cycle.

The role will be to review existing approaches, identify gaps and opportunities, provide technically sound options and recommendations, and propose practical pathways for consideration by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Education, and PARAKH, NCERT.

Background:

India has established a national large-scale assessment system through the National Achievement Survey (NAS), which has evolved into the PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan (PRS).

PRS provides system-level evidence on student learning and is intended to support understanding of the status of learning and areas requiring improvement across the school education system.

The PRS approach includes assessment of student learning alongside contextual information intended to provide insights into factors associated with learning outcomes.

The existing operational framework positions PRS as a standardised, equitable and inclusive national assessment and as a tool for understanding the health and performance of the education system.

UNICEF has supported the strengthening of national assessment and evidence systems in collaboration with PARAKH/NCERT.

Previous national discussions and technical reviews have highlighted areas for continued strengthening, including

comparability across assessment cycles, competency mapping, identification of learning gaps and misconceptions, inclusive assessment, analysis of contextual factors, and improved use of assessment evidence for system improvement.

The next PRS cycle provides an opportunity to consider how existing assessment evidence can be further strengthened and translated into more actionable information for education system improvement.

Rationale:

While PRS provides important information on learning outcomes, there is an opportunity to strengthen the extent to which the assessment can generate diagnostic and actionable system-level evidence.

In particular, there is value in examining how PRS can better support understanding of:

• what students are able or unable to do at different competency levels;

• common learning gaps, misconceptions and response patterns;

• changes in learning outcomes across assessment cycles;

• equity and inclusion across different groups of learners;

• factors associated with variations in learning outcomes; and

• implications of assessment findings for curriculum, textbooks, pedagogy, teacher development, assessment practices and learning resources.

The assignment therefore requires specialised international expertise in large-scale educational assessment, assessment design and analysis, comparability, inclusive assessment and use of assessment evidence for education system improvement.

The assignment will not involve primary data collection, field visits or implementation of assessment activities.

Scope of Work

The consultant will undertake a desk-based review of relevant PRS/NAS documentation, previous technical recommendations and relevant international assessment practices and prepare a Technical Note on Strengthening PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan.

The technical note will cover the following areas:

1. Review of the current PRS approach

The consultant will:

1.1 Review relevant PRS and previous NAS documentation, including the assessment framework, domains and competencies, test design, sampling, contextual questionnaires, analysis and reporting.

1.2 Review relevant recommendations from previous national technical discussions and relevant international assessment practices and approaches.

1.3 Identify key strengths, gaps and opportunities for further strengthening PRS as a national/system-level assessment.

2. Identify priority areas for technical strengthening

Based on the review, the consultant will provide technical recommendations and possible pathways in the following areas:

2.1 Assessment framework and competencies:

Opportunities to strengthen assessment of what students know and can do across competencies, including application and higher-order competencies where appropriate.

2.2 Comparability across assessment cycles:

Approaches to strengthen comparability and interpretation of changes in learning outcomes over time, including linking, anchor items and scaling, where appropriate.

2.3 Inclusive assessment:

Approaches to strengthen participation, accessibility, accommodations, analysis and reporting for diverse learner groups, including children with disabilities and other potentially under-represented groups.

2.4 Learning gaps and misconceptions:

Approaches for identifying and reporting competency-level learning gaps, common errors, misconceptions, proficiency levels and response patterns.

2.5 Contextual and explanatory evidence:

Opportunities to strengthen the use of contextual information to understand factors associated with variations in learning outcomes, including relevant student, teacher, classroom and school factors.

2.6 Analysis and interpretation:

Approaches for generating more actionable evidence on competencies, equity, learning gaps, misconceptions and relevant factors associated with learning outcomes.

3. Identify pathways for using PRS evidence for education system improvement

The consultant will examine how PRS evidence can better inform education system improvement, including:

• curriculum and curricular expectations;

• textbooks and learning materials;

• teaching-learning processes and pedagogy;

• teacher development;

• assessment practices; and

• teaching-learning resources.

The consultant will propose an assessment-to-system-improvement pathway that links PRS evidence and identified learning gaps and misconceptions to their diagnosis, implications for the education system, and appropriate system level responses.

4. Develop a technical pathway for strengthening PRS 2027

Based on the review and analysis, the technical note will:

4.1 Identify and prioritise technical areas that could realistically be considered for the PRS 2027 cycle.

4.2 For each priority area, outline:

• the issue/opportunity;

• rationale;

• possible technical options;

• recommended pathway for consideration;

• key methodological considerations;

• implications for data, instruments and analysis;

• technical expertise/capacity requirements; and

• key decisions required from PARAKH/NCERT and DoSE&L, MoE.

4.3 Distinguish between improvements that could be considered for PRS 2027 and areas requiring further technical development or longer-term consideration.

4.4 Present a consolidated set of recommendations and a practical technical pathway for consideration by PARAKH/NCERT and DoSE&L, MoE.

Work Assignment Overview	**Deliverables/ Outputs (SMART)***	**Delivery deadline**
Scope of work 1. Review and assess the current PRS approach 2. Identify priority areas for technical strengthening 3. Identify pathways for using PRS evidence for education system improvement 4. Develop a technical pathway for strengthening PRS 2027	**Technical Note on Strengthening PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan** The consultant will prepare a consolidated technical note that: • summarises the review of the current PRS approach; • identifies key technical gaps and opportunities; • presents evidence-informed recommendations across the priority areas; • provides possible technical options/pathways; • identifies implications for strengthening the use of PRS evidence for education system improvement; and • proposes priorities and a practical pathway for consideration in strengthening PRS 2027. The consultant will present the draft technical note to UNICEF and relevant technical stakeholders, incorporate consolidated feedback, and submit the final technical note.	31-12-2026

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- 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.
- The selected candidate is solely responsible for ensuring that the health insurance (and visa if applicable) required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract. Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully-vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.
- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES (CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Education:

Advanced university (Master's degree or above) degree in Educational Assessment/Measurement; Educational Psychology/ Statistics/ Psychometrics/ Social Sciences; or another closely related field

Work Experience:

A minimum of 12 years of professional experience in educational assessment, large-scale assessment, learning assessment, psychometrics, assessment research or related areas.

Language Requirements:

Fluency in English is required.

Knowledge/Expertise/Skills:

• Substantial multi-country experience in large-scale national and/or international educational assessments, including work across diverse education-system contexts.

• Demonstrated expertise in assessment framework development/review, competency-based assessment, assessment design, psychometrics, data analysis and interpretation.

• Demonstrated experience in comparability across assessment cycles, including linking, scaling and trend

measurement, and in inclusive assessment for diverse learner groups, including learners with disabilities.

• Experience analysing learning gaps, misconceptions, proficiency levels, response patterns and contextual factors associated with learning outcomes.

• Demonstrated ability to translate assessment evidence into actionable education policy and system-improvement recommendations, with experience working with ministries of education, national assessment institutions and/or international organisations across multiple countries.

• Strong written and verbal communication in English.

Desirables:

• Experience with national large-scale assessments in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Asia.

• Knowledge/experience of PISA, PIRLS, SEA-PLM or comparable international/regional assessments.

• Experience working with national assessment institutions and/or ministries of education on assessment-related initiatives.

• Familiarity with Indian school education and assessment context.

• Prior experience with UN agencies/government/international NGOs.