

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR LOCAL CONSULTANCY

Senior Expert for the Analysis of Armenia's National Learning Assessment System

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 early May to early December (approx. 7 months)

Purpose of Activity/Assignment:

The aim of the assignment is to support improvement of Armenia's national learning assessment system through comprehensive system analysis and policy recommendations that is systemic and would support implementing assessment for learning that is fair and equitable to all students. Under this assignment, the Senior Expert, working within a team of dedicated experts and guided by Team Leader, will be responsible for collecting the data and the analysis of Armenia's national learning assessment system. 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 4.6. which requires states to "ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy." 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 specific objectives under this assignment are:

- a) comprehensive literature review of advanced international research and practice, document review and key stakeholder consultations focusing on the following three dimensions: (i) the context of the national assessment system, (ii) the quality of assessment and (iii) coherence with the wider educational system;
- b) comparative analysis of the methodologies, produced data and required implementational resources of ATC-organized large-scale assessments (e.g. HAAS, BAAS), privately organized large-scale contest-assessments (e.g. Kangaroo) and international large-scale assessments (TIMSS, PISA) to identify which of these assessments would comprise be the efficient policy of generating evidence to analyze equitable student learning.

The analysis shall aim to provide evidence-based policy recommendations to improve Armenia's national learning assessment system.

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

National learning assessment systems are of particular importance in developing data-driven policies to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, achieve universal literacy and numeracy, and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for every child. Such systems are broadly defined as sets of policies, practices, structures, organizations and tools used to generate data and improve learning. Generally, four types of learning assessment are used by countries to guide learning, and are complementary in terms of objectives, scopes and limitations: (i) national large-scale assessments, examinations and tests (i.e. assessment *of* learning); (ii) international large-scale standardized assessments (i.e. assessment *of* learning); (iii) classroom assessment (i.e. assessment *as/for* learning), (iv) household surveys. Fairness and equity in assessment are important in recognizing and supporting the needs of increasingly diverse student populations.

Armenia's national learning assessment system is primarily defined by the Law on Education (1999), the Law on General Education (2009) and various normative documents prepared by the Ministry of Education and the Government. In 2004 Armenia established its National Assessment and Testing Centre (transferred from the Ministry's subordination to that of the Government Cabinet in 2009) mandated to develop and implement end-of-cycle graduation examinations (covering primary, secondary and high school graduations) and university admissions unified examinations; to provide methodological support to teachers in classroom assessment (the latter is summative at large); to implement national and international assessments; and to research and analyze assessment and examinations data. Starting in 2009 unified examinations have been used for all subjects. In 2010 Armenia conducted its first domestically-developed national large-scale assessment (sample-based survey adopting certain technical procedures from TIMSS) in the Armenian language, literature, and history (HAAS 2010), in physics and chemistry (BAAS 2011), in geography and biology (BAAS) and ICT (Information Communication Technology) in 2012, in foreign languages (OLAAS) in 2013. Since 2010 the National Assessment and Testing Centre has been regularly conducting the above-mentioned national large-scale assessments and external subject-specific evaluations to provide student achievement data comparable to in-school summative assessments. Since 2008, most Armenian students have annually participated in privately developed and administered (i.e. Ayb Educational Foundation) large-scale subject contests measuring their knowledge and skills: Kangaroo in mathematics (about 40,000 participants nationally), Russian Bear assessment in Russian language and Bee in the Armenian language. In 2003, 2007, 2008 (TIMSS Advanced), 2011 and 2015 Armenia has also participated in TIMSS (i.e., The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) by The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). In 2011 Armenia participated in the SABER (System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results) Student Assessment to benchmark its student assessment system, so far, the first and largest systematic examination of the national learning assessment system.

In 2021, the Government approved Armenia's new National Curriculum, to implement the provisions of which in full, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS) joint with the National Assessment and Testing Centre (NATC) and its newly established National Center for Educational Development and Innovation (NCEDI) intends to review the national learning assessment system, design new classroom assessment guidelines and train teachers.

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 two 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, including moderation of focus group discussions (FGs), Key expert and key informant interviews (KEI, KII) with assistance of Junior Experts. The Consultant should support the team in database processing, data management and tabulation if any. Along with 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, 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.

International expertise will be available for guidance and orientation to globally available resources and methodologies. 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 quantitative 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 analysis of Armenia's national learning assessment shall follow a comprehensive two-stage approach.

- 1) **Firstly**, Armenia's national learning assessment system shall be benchmarked and evaluated against quality criteria based on the ANLAS methodology developed by the Global Partnership for Education. This analysis shall include comprehensive literature review of advanced international research and practice, document review and key stakeholder consultations focusing on the following three dimensions: (i) the context of the national assessment system, (ii) the quality of assessment and (iii) coherence with the wider educational system. Each dimension shall be evaluated based on dimensional key areas and defined quality objectives.
 - i) The first dimension refers to the broader context in which the national learning assessment system is located and the extent to which this context is supportive of the assessment system. The key areas include: (i) legislation or policy, (ii) institutional arrangements and governance structures, (iii) funding, (iv) leadership.
 - ii) The second dimension refers to the overarching key quality concepts for learning assessments: clarity and consistency of purpose, fitness for purpose, technical rigor, objectivity and independence, transparency and accountability and ethicality and fairness. The key areas are defined per type of the assessment: (i) large-scale assessments and examinations, (ii) classroom assessments.
 - iii) The third dimension relates to the extent to which the assessment system is consistent with important aspects of the broader education system and other aspects within the assessment system. The key areas include: (i) learning standards and curriculum, (ii) education system structure, (iii) education priorities, (iv) system-level data use.

Secondly, comparative analysis of the methodologies, produced data and required implementational resources of ATC-organized large-scale assessments (e.g. HAAS, BAAS), privately organized large-scale contest-assessments (e.g. Kangaroo) and international large-scale assessments (TIMSS, PISA) to identify which of these assessments would comprise be the efficient policy of generating evidence to analyze equitable student learning.

The final reports should incorporate the main learnings from all stages and provide concrete and accurate policy solutions for the MESCS 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	Estimated Budget
Inception Phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 on-line survey and 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 Analysis of national learning assessment systems (ANLAS)-based dimension descriptions, etc.	End of May, 2021	
Fieldwork Phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure pretesting and finalization of the instruments based on the methodology developed by the study team; - Support the comprehensive literature review; - Cleaning and comprehensive analysis of the quantitative data provided by the NCET; - Collecting qualitative data through remote KEI/KIIs and FGs (if any); - Data cleaning and initial processing; - Submission of data collection report covering the following pieces: documentation of fieldwork implementation, quality control, final instruments, and datasets. - 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 datasets and full transcripts/audio-files of KEI/KIIs and FGs	End of August, 2021	
Analysis and Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data further processing and analytics; - Inputs for development of the draft report for UNICEF Armenia review providing data visualization. The contents of the report should be developed based on feedback provided after testing and analysis phase of the assignment. - Inputs for development of the final report. 	Draft reports in English and Armenian Final reports in English and Armenian with recommendations (up to 50 pages, excluding annexes) and an Executive Summary	Mid-November, 2021 Early December, 2021	

<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 large-scale assessments) with solid knowledge of international research practice in the field of school leadership as well as of Armenia's national school leadership system. • Extensive experience in research projects, studies, evaluations and household 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 FG moderation and qualitative interviewing, including interviewing children. • Data management and processing skills through application of SPSS, STATA or other relevant packages. • Proven ability of working in large teams and expert groups as well as of working in international and multicultural environments, as well as with children and adolescents. • Fluency in written and spoken English. • Previous experience in working with UN agencies will be an asset.
<p>Terms of the application:</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of applications is April 25. 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 online application link found at:</p> <p>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>	

