

## TERMS OF REFERENCE for INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANCY

### Independent Appraisal of the Education Sector Plan, Republic of Armenia

**Individual Consultant is expected to perform this assignment remotely (home based)**

**Supervisor:** Education Specialist and Education Officer (GPE)

**Time-frame:** from mid-June to end of July (approx. 1,5 months)

The purpose of the consultancy is to work with and provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, Science, Cultures and Sports (MoESCS) by carrying out an external independent appraisal and critical analysis of the draft State Program for Education Development in the Republic of Armenia until 2030 (hereafter referred to as Education Sector Plan). This assignment is guided by the vision of the 2021-2026 Republic of Armenia Government Activities Program (more specifically, the section on General Education) and the 2022-2030 Education Sector Plan based on it. The assignment is within Activity 1.2 (Contribute to the development/establishment of sectoral programme goals, objectives, strategies, and results-based planning through equity focused research, collection, analysis and reporting of education and other related information for development planning and priority and goal setting ) under Output 3.1 (National systems and capacities of officials and other stakeholders are strengthened to develop evidence-based policies, plans and budgets, ensuring inclusive and equitable education outcomes for all children) of the Armenia-UNICEF Multi-Year Work Plan 2022-2023 and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Education Sector Plan Development Grant, where UNICEF acts as Grant Agent, supporting the Government and national stakeholders.

As part of the development process, the Education Sector Plan must be independently appraised prior to its finalization and endorsement. The independent appraisal of an Education Sector Plan is a GPE requirement, for the Government and international development partners to ensure the robustness and credibility of the Education Sector Plan and its M&E framework. An individual consultant is required to carry out the independent appraisal of the Education Sector Plan based on the characteristics defined in the GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal<sup>1</sup>, which are designed to assess both the process of developing the Education Sector Plan and its contents in respect to the five criteria: 1) leadership and participation; 2) soundness and relevance, 3) equity, efficiency and learning in basic education; 4) coherence; and 5) feasibility, implementability and monitorability.

This activity will contribute to the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Target 4.1. which requires states to realize “that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.” At the global level, the agenda around the SDG 4 (Quality Education) 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 include:

1. **Assess the quality of the Education Sector Plan preparation process and content**, including:
  - a. Leadership and participation: Assess the role of the Government, and the extent to which international development partners and other stakeholders’ participated in the Education Sector Plan preparation.
  - b. Soundness and relevance: Assess the extent to which the key challenges identified in the education sector analysis have been sufficiently considered in the Education Sector Plan and identify gaps if any.
  - c. Equity, efficiency and learning: Assess if the Education Sector Plan is designed to address equity, efficiency and learning with solid change strategies and results framework.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidelines-education-sector-plan-appraisal>

- d. **Coherence:** Assess the extent to which strategies, programmes, interventions, budget, and monitoring/evaluation indicators are mutually coherent.
- e. **Feasibility, implementability and monitorability:** Assess whether financing, implementation mechanisms and monitoring arrangements are sufficiently solid to reasonably ensure expected results are achieved.

2. **Provide actionable recommendations regarding suggested improvements of the Education Sector Plan for:**
  - a. **the immediate term** (areas that can be addressed prior to its finalization and endorsement); and
  - b. **the medium term** (areas that can be addressed during plan implementation or subsequent reviews).

**Key stakeholders** of the assignment are the government line ministries, namely the MoESCS, the Ministries of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MoTAI), sub-national and local authorities, the GPE Secretariat, UNICEF, the Asian Development Bank, EU, the World Bank, other international development partners, and dedicated CSOs.

The knowledge generated by the appraisal exercise should be used by the MoESCS to inform and amplify its actions for 2022-2030 period, reflected in the approved Education Sector Plan. It will be also used by UNICEF and other national stakeholders to further refine the quality, targeting, groundedness and timeliness of policies in the field of general education.

### Scope of Work:

#### Context

In 2019, the MoESCS requested development partners' and donors' support for the development of the Education Development Strategy. At the same time, it was approached by the GPE Secretariat and informed about the opportunity for the Government of the Republic of Armenia to benefit from GPE funding through the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) facility and conduct a comprehensive Education Sector Review. The MoESCS, with governmental order, reconstituted the Local Education Group (LEG), which has been titled Commission on Development, Coordination and Endorsement of Education (CDCEE). The latter nominated UNICEF as GPE ESPDG Grant Agent, with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) nominated as Coordinating Agency. The rationale for application to the GPE was guided by the MoESCS objective to establish a systematic approach and institutional structure for education sector analysis, enhancing the quality of education sector plans, budgeting as well as to ensure regular participatory and joint education sector reviews.

According to the Law on Education (1999), the Education Sector Plan shall be considered as the organizational base for state policy in the field of education, and the State shall ensure the maintenance and development of the field of education through targeted budgetary financing according to the Program (Article 4.4 & 5; 2015). Since 1991, only two education sector plans were developed and implemented. The first one for 2001-2005 and the second one for 2011-2015. Both programs were based on achievements already accomplished in the educational system and set out the main development goals for the given period. Since 2016, the education system in Armenia has been functioning without an education sector plan. Nonetheless, currently, the country is already in the process of the finalization of the 2022-2030 Education Sector Plan, which is led by the MoESCS. The Government's aspiration for education is to create an inclusive student-centered learning environment for all with focus on education quality and equity in line with SDG 4 targets.

Major processes include broad consultations at both national and sub-national levels with key stakeholders, including line ministries, regional and local authorities, academia, CSOs, teachers, adolescents, and youth. Key international development partners, such as UNICEF, the EU and the World Bank (WB), among many others, are also part of the consultative process that helps to establish the criteria and identify key priorities for the Education Sector in Armenia in line with SDG 4.

#### Methodology

The independent appraisal of the education sector plan should cover (in a coherent manner) the general questions and sub-questions outlined under the five key criteria of the GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal, presented below. These guidelines are meant to be adapted to the national context and needs by the hired consultant in consultation with UNICEF. The stakeholders should discuss the scope and the methodology of the appraisal to be used and develop a common vision of the whole process. The appraisal process should be participatory and grounded in the policy and technical dialogue for Education Sector Plan development. It should involve consultations and interviews with key stakeholders who participated in Education Sector Plan preparation, in addition to a desk review of

the Education Sector Plan and any other relevant documents. A validation workshop of the appraisal report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be organized to feed into the Education Sector Plan finalization.

An overview of the appraisal criteria is as follows:

**1) Leadership and participation:**

- Has the plan preparation process been country-led, participatory, and transparent?
  - i) Leadership and Ownership: To what extent is Government leadership and partners' ownership reflected in the Education Sector Plan?
  - ii) Participatory Process: What is the level of involvement among the local stakeholders and development partners?
  - iii) Capacity Development: To what extent was plan preparation used as an opportunity to develop national capacities in education policy and planning?

**2) Soundness and Relevance:**

- Does the plan constitute a solid corpus of strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the education sector?
  - i) Evidence-based education sector analysis: What empirical evidence was available and was it used effectively?
  - ii) Relevance of Policies and Programs: Do the proposed priorities and programmes form a relevant response to the challenges?
  - iii) Soundness of the financial framework: Is the financial framework adequate and credible?
  - iv) Soundness of the action plan: Does the action plan provide a sound operational framework?

**3) Equity, Efficiency, and Learning in Basic Education:**

- Are the key dimensions of equity, efficiency, inclusivity and learning soundly addressed to increase sector performance?
  - i) Robustness and relevance of the strategies: Are the designed strategies and programmes relevant to address the three key dimensions?
  - ii) Change strategies: Are the strategies designed to introduce transformational changes?
  - iii) Results Framework: Can the results framework be used to monitor improvements in the three key areas?

**4) Coherence:**

- Does the plan constitute a consistent and coherent corpus of strategies and actions?
  - i) Coherence among the strategies, programmes, and interventions: Is there consistency between the various components of the Education Sector Plan?
  - ii) Comprehensive costing aligned with the budget: How consistent are the scenario and the costing with other parts of the Education Sector Plan?
  - iii) Coherence of monitoring and evaluation indicators: Are the M&E indicators consistent with the policy priorities and the planned programs and activities?

**5) Feasibility, Implementability, and Monitorability:**

- Do the financing, implementation, and monitoring arrangements offer a good perspective for achievement?
  - i) Financial feasibility: Is the financial plan adequate and realistic?
  - ii) System capacity: Does the plan identify and address capacity constraints that would affect plan implementation?
  - iii) Governance and Accountability: Are there strategies in place to improve and establish good governance practices and management accountability across the system?
  - iv) Risks to implementation and mitigation of risks: Does the Education Sector Plan design take into consideration possible risks and constraints in implementation?
  - v) Robustness of the monitoring and evaluation framework: Does the M&E system provide robust indicators based on valid and reliable data to monitor the progress toward the achievement of outputs and outcomes described in the results framework? Are the reporting, feedback, and consultation mechanisms transparent and adequate to maintain broad ownership during implementation?

**Ethical Consideration**

The Consultant will ensure that the process is in line with UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis<sup>2</sup> and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation<sup>3</sup>. The Consultant should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Consultant should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. In the case of consultations with relevant stakeholders, all participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Appraisal, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The Consultant can use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference. The appraisal process should be independent of the actors who contributed to the education plan preparation.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

<sup>3</sup> See UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

Work Assignment Overview			
Tasks/Milestone:	Deliverables/Outputs:	Timeline <sup>4</sup>	Estimate Budget
<p>1) <b>Undertake a desk review of key documents</b>, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The previous and current draft Education Sector Plan and its Action Plan.</li> <li>- The current Education Sector Analysis.</li> <li>- The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.</li> <li>- Learning Assessment Reports.</li> <li>- Education Statistics.</li> <li>- Thematic studies, with a focus on equity, learning and efficiency.</li> <li>- the 2021-2026 Republic of Armenia Government Activities Program.</li> <li>- Reports on implementation of education sector reforms or evaluations of various education projects.</li> <li>- Other documents, upon necessity.</li> </ul> <p>2) Based on the GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal, adopt and finalize the appraisal methodology approach, the criteria Matrix and tools</p> <p>3) <b>Organize on-line meetings and consultations (5-10 overall) with key partners and LEG members (upon necessity), including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government agencies at central level: MoESCS, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, etc. (up to 5 meetings)</li> <li>- Education authorities at sub-national levels (up to 2 meetings).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation of preliminary findings from the desk review and consultations/meetings to the Local Education Groups (LEG).</li> <li>- PPT developed and shared with UNICEF one day prior its presentation to LEG.</li> </ul> <p>- Appraisal matrix with appraisal criteria and questions based on the critical elements of ESP as defined in the GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal</p> <p>PPT developed on the main findings and shared with UNICEF one day prior its presentation to the LEG validation workshop.</p>	<p>Early July, 2022</p> <p>15 working days</p>	

<sup>4</sup> Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signing

- International development Partners, CSOs, education experts and public and private education providers (teachers, school managers, etc.) (up to 4 meetings).			
<b>Preparation of the Draft appraisal report</b> which includes the assessment of the process and contents of the Education Sector Plan as per the GPE guideline as well as recommendations that feed into the finalization of the Education Sector Plan.	- Draft appraisal report presented to UNICEF for comments Draft appraisal report, incorporating UNICEF comments, shared with UNICEF, the ADB, GPE Secretariat and MoESCS.	Mid-July, 2022 10 working days	
<b>Preparation of the Final appraisal report</b> based on received comments from UNICEF, ADB, GPE Secretariat and the MoESCS.	Final appraisal report that includes an executive summary (5-10 pages long) presented to UNICEF.	End of July, 2022 5 working days	

<p><b>Minimum Qualifications required:</b></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 and/or academic background in Education, Sociology, Economics, Public Policy, Social Policy or a related field.</p>	<p><b>Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required:</b></p> <p><b>Qualifications or specialized knowledge/experience required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 8 years of documented experience in education planning, management, monitoring and/or evaluation with solid knowledge of Armenia's national education system.</li> <li>• Experience of carrying out past independent appraisals or evaluations/assessments of education sector programs considered an advantage.</li> <li>• Having passed training in the GPE-IIEP Guidelines on Education Sector Plan Appraisal<sup>56</sup> will be an advantage.</li> <li>• Very good communication and presentation skills with government and international organizations.</li> <li>• Fluency in written and spoken English, including report writing skills.</li> </ul>
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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/gpeiiep-training-fundamentals-independent-appraisal-education-sector-plans-13281>

<sup>6</sup> Consultant(s) selected who have not undertaken the GPE/IIEP training on the Fundamentals of Independent Appraisal of Education Sector Plans will need to complete the training successfully prior to undertaking the appraisal. The training takes approximately 15 hours to complete.

- Previous experience in working with UN agencies will be an asset.

**Terms of the application:**

The deadline for the submission of applications is **June 20**. Applications should include:

- Cover letter;
- CV;
- Financial Proposal;
- Published research and analytical documents relevant to the TOR.

All qualified applicants should apply online, using the UNICEF E-Recruitment system and following the online application link. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

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.