**UNICEF ECA Regional Office**

**Evaluation section**

**Terms of Reference**

**Developmental Evaluation of LearnIn initiative**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Country:** | UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Region (ECAR) |
| **Title of evaluation** | Developmental Evaluation of LearnIn initiative in ECAR |
| **Object of evaluation:** | LearnIn |
| **Time period of evaluation:** | From mid-2020 up to now |
| **Geographic coverage:** | ECARO, Regional Office and Country Offices (to be confirmed) |
| **Type of evaluation:** | Developmental evaluation |
| **Date of preparation of TOR:** | September-October 2021 |

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CO | Country Office |
| ECA  ECARO | Europe and Central Asia  Europe and Central Asia Regional Office |
| ERB | Ethic Review Board |
| ERG | Evaluation Reference Group |
| IR | Inception Report |
| RO | Regional Office |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children Fund |

# **CONTEXT**

The start of COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 stalled progress toward ensuring quality education for all children and widened existing gaps in learning quality and equity. Europe and Central Asia (ECA) was no exception, with 53.4 million children across ECA experiencing unprecedented disruption to their learning during COVID-19 compounded by challenges such as the digital divide in access to technology and digital kills. Understanding the necessity for schools to provide quality, relevant learning for every child and to be adaptive to such shocks, the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) is supporting digital learning solutions, such as by upskilling teachers to provide quality, inclusive instruction via digital platforms. As digital learning becomes increasingly relevant, however, such solutions must ensure that learners remain the end-users and beneficiaries. Opening up better schools and building more resilient systems will necessitate valid and reliable data not only on the role that such solutions play in ensuring that effective, quality, and inclusive learning continues during crises like COVID-19, but also on the extent of the learning crisis in ECA and effective strategies for bridging learning gaps. While schools aim to recover lost learning and prepare for future emergencies, the central focus must remain on ensuring that quality education leads to relevant and effective learning outcomes for all girls and boys.

In April 2020, RO launched LearnIn, a digital learning initiative that aims to support teachers and students as lifelong learners by empowering teachers with high quality, culturally relevant, and collaborative learning opportunities and supports them in creating meaningful learning experiences for their students across diverse learning environments. LearnIn is designed to be an evidence-based initiative, informed, contextualized, and improved by research and adapt to the contexts.

UNICEF ECAR seeks a skilled developmental evaluator to design and implement a Developmental Evaluation (DE) of the LearnIn initiative informing adaptive decisions about the strategic direction of LearnIn, documenting the evolving history of LearnIn, and facilitating learning and reflective practice.

# **OBJECT OF EVALUATION**

The object of evaluation is the digital learning initiative LearnIn, including its work on digital learning platforms, specifically, its platform-of-choice, Learning Passport. LearnIn was conceptualized to respond to ECA learning crisis affecting millions of children and young people who remain excluded and deprived from quality learning opportunities, especially the region’s most vulnerable children[[1]](#footnote-2). The basic programme assumption is that, given an enabling environment with government commitment, stakeholder buy-in, and adequate infrastructure and funding, supporting the instructional core—that is, the interactions among educators, learners, and content—and integrating technology to facilitate and improve the quality and inclusiveness of (rather than to replace) these interactions will improve the learning outcomes of children. The initiative aims to accelerate learning outcomes, especially for the most marginalized children, by harnessing the potential of technology to provide equitable access to quality, inclusive learning and skills development opportunities, even at a distance, and to strengthen teachers’ sense of agency and their capacity to support all learners through ongoing professional and peer support and collaborative learning in communities of practice. Through its digital learning platform-of-choice, Learning Passport, LearnIn facilitates creation of, access to, and distribution of quality learning materials and skills development content for teachers and learners, which can be selected to support personalized learning pathways to meet one’s own learning goals and needs

The intended impact outlined by the ToC is that by the end of 2025, XXX,000[[2]](#footnote-3) primary and secondary school-aged children in Europe and Central Asia will have improved learning outcomes through participation in high-quality learning and skills development via effective, scalable and sustainable digital learning solutions. To achieve this vision, UNICEF will focus on: (i) improving access to quality, inclusive, relevant, skills-focused and personalised learning content and teaching for all children, especially the most marginalised; (ii) providing all children, especially the most marginalised, the means and necessary support to participate in such learning and skills development, even when schools are closed; (iii) strengthening the enabling environment for scalable and sustainable digital learning by supporting its integration in education policies, plans, budgets, reforms and data systems, prioritizing digital learning in regional and national partnerships, and generating, using and sharing knowledge on digital learning that is effective and equitable.

At the global and regional level, the UNICEF ECARO Education section is responsible for providing technical support, financial resources, guidance documents and contextualizable resources, partnerships, evidence generation and key documents, including regional frameworks and the prioritisation of digitally-supported quality, inclusive learning in regional workplans. The Education section works closely with UNICEF HQ (PD Education –Reimagine Education team) to ensure alignment among global and regional priorities and leverage ongoing activities and forms of support. The Education section works with other sections within the Regional Office, including ICT4D on providing guidance to COs on device procurement and connectivity, ECD to identify and leverage synergies with the RO’s work on digital platforms for early learning (i.e., PlayIn using Learning Passport), and C4D for supporting government accountability on digital learning. Within countries, the main government counterparts for implementing LearnIn are Ministries of Education. UNICEF COs also work with provincial directors of ministries, municipalities, local education groups, schools, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector, and other priority partners identified by UNICEF COs. COs are responsible for engaging Implementing Partners at the national level to carry out the activities which COs identify as priorities in line with their (UNICEF COs’) digital learning plans and national digital learning plans and roadmaps.

Therefore, UNICEF’s Theory of Change for LearnIn is:

•**One, if** countries have scaled up accessible, inclusive and safe digital learning platforms, and if these platforms are integrated within the instructional core of schools and provide all learners access to quality, personalized learning even when schools are closed;

•**Two, if** governments have been supported to identify, curate, and digitize learning materials in line with their curricula that are skills focused and relevant to children’s learning goals and the demands of the labour market, and if these materials are openly accessible to all children through inclusive digital learning platforms;

•**Three, if** all pre-and in-service teachers are supported to develop competencies for delivering inclusive, personalized learning, including through digital technology; and if teachers are provided ongoing peer and school-based support to maintain and strengthen these competencies;

•**Four, if** all children have access to quality internet connection and if all children have access to and can equitably and safely use devices to access quality, inclusive, personalised learning anytime, anywhere;

•**Five, if** young people possess the skills for and are provided equitable and inclusive opportunities for engaging in digital learning and innovation; and

•**Six, if** countries have enabling environments that institutionalise, prioritise and adequately fund evidence-based digital learning for strengthening education systems’ effectiveness, resilience, and equity;

**Then** primary and secondary school-aged children and young people will have improved learning outcomes through participation in high quality learning and skills development; and more children and young people, especially the most vulnerable and risk of being left behind, are more likely to be reached by scalable, sustainable digital learning solutions.

The diagram on Annex 1 demonstrates this ToC showing UNICEF’s inputs and outputs as they relate to the intended outcomes and impact. The tables in the Annex outline the ToC as it relates to UNICEF, implementing partners, government, and others, including the conditions and actions from other actors that UNICEF sees as necessary for its contribution to achieve the intended outcomes and impact.

# **EVALUATION CONTEXT**

In order to help contain the spread of COVID-19 in the region, schools were closed nationwide in 20 countries in the ECA region in 2020 and 2021. There is evidence that even a short disruption to schooling can have a long-term persistent effect on children and especially with greater losses for already disadvantaged populations[[3]](#footnote-4). Governments and education stakeholders have responded to this challenge by delivering educational content via various channels including online, TV and offline tools.  Nevertheless, concerns have been raised over access to, participation in, and the quality of distance learning--especially for children with disabilities, those living in institutions, children in remote, rural areas, ethnic and linguistic minority children, and those from the poorest households.

UNICEF analysis show that families with parents who are teleworking and those with limited schooling themselves, as well as poorer families are most at risk of not providing their children with full support[[4]](#footnote-5). Moreover, many surveys across different contexts suggest that socioeconomic factors affect access to distance learning, parental support for learning at home, and time spent studying while schools are closed[[5]](#footnote-6). There is evidence that children benefit from home-based learning resources in different ways when wealthier households seek distance learning opportunities at higher rates than poorer households and that learning loss during school closures is likely to be even more severe and unequal than previously observed summer learning losses[[6]](#footnote-7). These concerns have been accompanied by those regarding child protection issues at home, new challenges presented to parents, and the quality of care[[7]](#footnote-8).

Furthermore, concerns about the quality of learning and resulting learning loss, especially for vulnerable groups, translate into concerns about schools re-opening as ‘business as usual’[[8]](#footnote-9). However, schools and, more broadly, education systems, have an opportunity to *build back better* by harnessing technology to support the instructional core by offering quality, relevant content, multiple modes of learning delivery and additional support, particularly for the most excluded, and to be better prepared for future crises and school closures. In most countries UNICEF has been supporting governments with prevention, hygiene, safe school operations, while some are helping by providing learning support for the most vulnerable children, psychosocial support to teachers, students and families, and support recovery of learning[[9]](#footnote-10) . UNICEF education response ultimately seeks to contribute to building resilient systems in the future, i.e.‘[S]ystems that are more flexible, fully dedicated to ALL children learning through a range of learning modalities and technologies, and better equipped to face potential crises’[[10]](#footnote-11).

It is in this context of COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges it poses to children and their future, and longer-term efforts to digitalize education systems that UNICEF has been implementing LearnIn in order to provide children, especially the most vulnerable, with a quality and continuous learning. Developmental evaluation can support the agile development and longer term sustainability of the initiative, since it is operating in rapidly changing environments, with an untested theory of change, while piloting highly innovative approaches that need further refinement and seeking to achieve complex outcomes that may need to change over time, particularly at the level of country implementation.

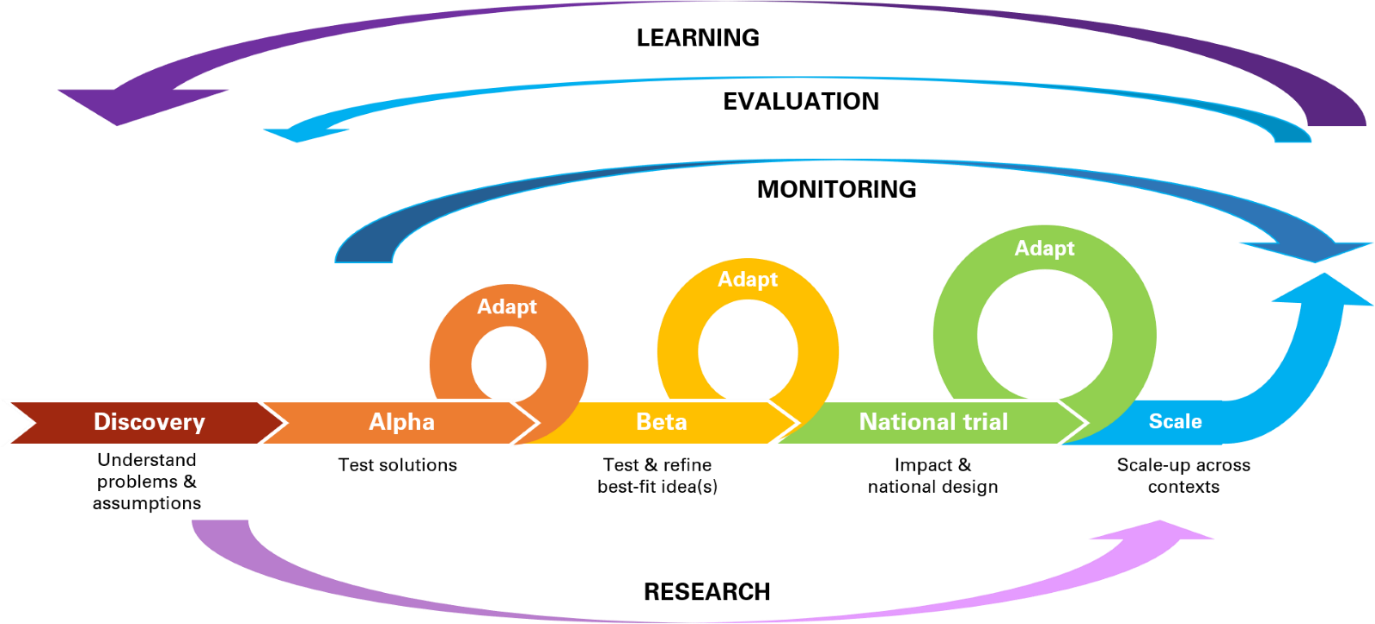
# **RATIONALE, PURPOSE AND USE OF EVALUATION**

Rationale: The key rationale for the developmental evaluationisto support UNICEF and its partners with the designing and implementing of effective digital learning initiatives, such as LearnIn, with digital learning solutions such as Learning Passport and do so from the start of the initiative. Therefore, the timing of the developmental evaluation is absolutely critical to produce knowledge at the initial stage of implementation and ensure its use for continual improvement.

Purpose: DE is one of the components of LearnIn Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) framework (Figure 1) which supports the other components - monitoring, impact evaluation and learning - in the following ways:

* DE will provide ongoing, and iterative data collection, analysis, and feedback about the design and implementation of the initiative to understand what is and is not working in digitally-supported learning for children, especially for the most marginalized. It will contribute to timely changes throughout the initiative as unexpected results make themselves visible and document those changes and the process. This will also contribute to the impact evaluation of LearnIn.
* DE will help to monitor how rapidly changing environments evolve and enable UNICEF and its implementing partners to work collaboratively to adjust programme activities and objectives in response.
* DE will systematically document decision-making processes and the ways LearnIn evolves over time. This documentation in and of itself is unique and allows key policy- and decision-makers to create new policies and practices that draw from past experiences or revisit earlier decisions.
* DE will also contribute to capacity building of UNICEF and partners in programme monitoring, help them further improve it and strengthen the existing data use and data collection mechanisms in programme management and adaptation.

Figure 1. LearnIn Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL)



The primary users of DE is UNICEF ECARO Education section and their implementing partners, RO evaluation section, COs education focal points with responsibilities for leading and managing LearnIn implementation at the national level and their national partners.

# **OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION**

The objectives of the DE are to:

* Provide timely, “good enough” evidence on the initial phases of LearnIn implementation, namely what works in designing and implementing digital learning solutions that support quality, inclusive learning for children, especially the most marginalized;
* Inform timely and continuous adaptations in the implementation of LearnIn, especially as it relates to ongoing pandemic response and recovery as well as long-term system digitalization.
* Inform decision-makers in adapting UNICEF’s approach to the COVID response and the longer-term digitalization of education systems.
* Collect information in real time and dedicate resources to ongoing analysis to enable UNICEF to strengthen its understanding of the decision-making process and effects, establishing a document archive for both current and future use, and make better use of its data.

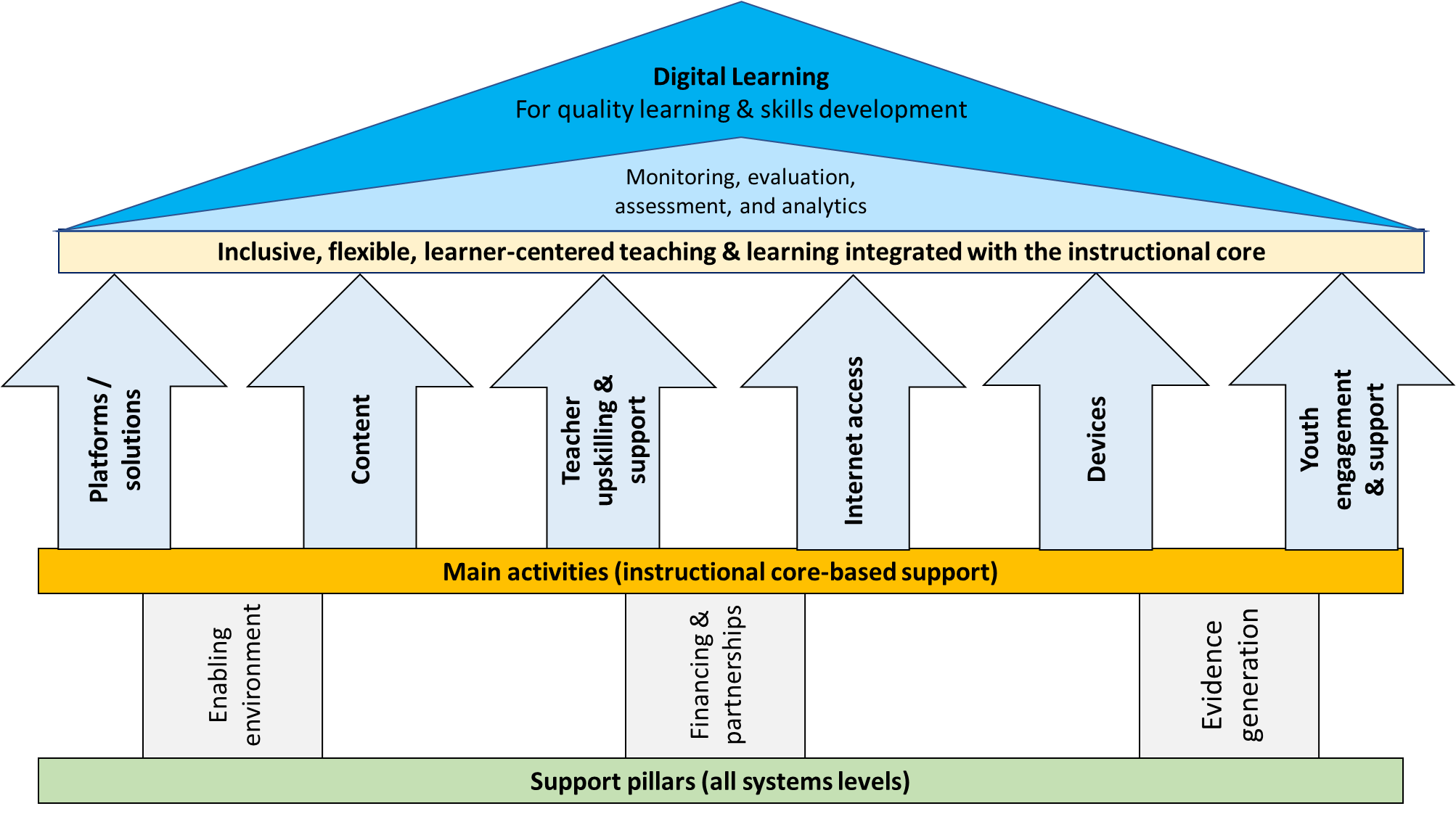
The DE will help UNICEF and its implementing partners evaluate and learn in real time and capture that learning into various outputs about the progress and effectiveness of the LearnIn initiative. DE will also ensure rigorous documentation of the learnings throughout the process, enabling them to be shared, replicated, and available for in-depth review for how decisions were made and adaptations executed. This documentation facilitates informed iterations within the programme, revisiting decisions to try different approaches when desired, and supports other similar initiatives in their learning and approaches to collective impact and complex partnerships.

# **SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION**

Programmatic coverage: Developmental evaluation will cover the LearnIn programme in its entirety, but it is not impossible that DE will have a more targeted focus for some countries. The preliminary idea is to focus on LearnIn implementation through digital learning platforms, specifically its platform-of-choice, Learning Passport. However, it will be important that the DE cover other activities, such as teacher professional development, given their interlinkages and independency in producing the joint results and their centrality to the regional approach to digital learning, which focuses on the instructional core. More specific scope of DE will be discussed and agreed during the inception stage.

LearnIn involves two workstreams. The first, LearnIn’s main activities, is oriented at integration within the instructional core and includes: 1) accessible online and offline learning platforms; 2) quality, curriculum-aligned, relevant, and competency-based content; 3) teacher upskilling and ongoing support to strengthen quality, inclusive, and personalized pedagogy; 4) internet connectivity and device procurement to expand access to quality learning, even when schools are closed; and 5) support to learners and engagement of youth. LearnIn’s second workstream of support pillars, implemented in tandem with the main activities, includes 1) fostering an enabling environment for quality, inclusive education through digital learning; 2) ensuring sufficient and equitable financing; 3) strengthening and increasing partnerships; and 4) evidence generation not only for improving implementation but also to support ongoing learning and knowledge sharing (Figure 1). The support pillars workstream aims to support the creation of the conditions necessary for the main activities to be effective, sustainable and scalable, such as by ensuring government buy-in, adequate funding, strong partnerships, and evidence generation for accountability, management, improvement, and learning.

Figure 2. Workstreams for LearnIn implementation



Time and Geographical coverage**:** The evaluation will cover the period coinciding with the development and roll out of the digital learning approach in the region, starting from mid-2020 up to now. The initiative is implemented in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Uzbekistan may be good fits for DE. However, since the programme is in its initial stageof design and implementation and the idea is to further fine-tune the selection of countries through the developmental evaluation approach, specific country offices for DE and its scope will be agreed when the DE starts. Three or so countries (to be finalised during the inception) will be selected for the purposes of DE.

# **APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY; CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS**[[11]](#footnote-12)

Approach: LearnIn MERL framework is based on the agile development approach which is an iterative, flexible and adaptable process for the development of a product or service. In the spirit of agile development, DE will be fully embedded within the programme and lead the programme team to engage in evidence-based decision-making, navigating the unique complexities of the different contexts, and employing reflective practice. The principles of this approach suit the highly adaptive nature of the LearnIn Initiative and embodies the principles of the collaborative and trust-based relationships that this initative is based on.

DE is a highly participatory process. The DE will have a Country Office orientation but will also include the regional level work and coordination of the LearnIn initiative. As LearnIn is the regional operationalization of the global Reimagine Education initiative, the DE will, to some extent, also include work by UNICEF HQ, as well as ongoing research by UNICEF Innocenti, such as on Learning Passport in the selected countries as relevant. The evaluation should be considered as ‘real-time’ in that the evaluator will be collecting data on an ongoing basis by interacting with the COs and RO, and both monitoring and contributing to its decision-making process. The DE will rely on the research, monitoring and learning components of the LearnIn MERL. DE will collect data on the adaptation of implementation and its effects, and then provide that feedback to the stakeholders. This type of data capture will typically be done through ongoing data collection efforts, such as taking notes at regular developmental evaluation participant meetings, reviewing documentation, and occasionally requesting interviews with pertinent stakeholders. Some sort of survey with beneficiaries may also be included once discussed and agreed. Developmental evaluator will also make use of data produced by other MERL components. It will be important to disaggregate adaptation data within the broader evaluative data set and analyse those data separately. This disaggregation can help the developmental evaluator provide the programme stakeholders with regular updates regarding adaptations, their progress, and outcomes. Capturing the effects of adaptation constitutes an essential part and is independent from other MERL components.

The DE will begin in January 2022 and last throughout the year. The activity will be managed by the ECARO Evaluation section and conducted by an external evaluator. The ECARO Evaluation Section will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the evaluation and for management of the evaluation budget. UNICEF assumes that the Evaluator would not join UNICEF teams in person but might travel as needed and as possible to meet with partners or other stakeholders and/or collect additional data if the pandemic situations improves in any given context and time. The Evaluator will have additional technical support from UNICEF education section and COsthroughout the implementation of the DE. A form of advisory group (e.g. Steering Committee, Reference Group consisting of UNICEF RO, CO and key stakeholders – those who are involved in LearnIn decision making) will undoubtedly be required to facilitate the follow up of DE findings and conclusions. Further discussion is needed on its form and membership to focus on iterative learning for adaptive management and would be expected to engage closely with the Evaluator.

Criteria and questions: There will be learning and accountability questions with more attention and focus on the former. Unlike a traditional evaluation, the specific learning questions to be addressed will be identified in the inception phase (as opposed to include in this ToR). The focus on utilization and learning will require a preliminary round of stakeholder engagement to help determine the initial focus and frame the questions. Questions will be identified and vetted as part of developing a learning agenda for the learning component of LearnIn MERL. The result will be a living document that guides the evaluation questions, data collection, learning discussions, and feedback loops; and allows for an iterative process.

There is also a possibility that DE will be focused on the relevance and to a lesser extent on the effectiveness of LearnIn. It is expected that DE will help with improving both aspects and answer the following:

**Relevance**:

Design quality:

o How clear was the LearnIn logic formulated and how adequate, realistic and feasible were its objectives, pathways of change and underlying assumptions?

* + How clearly does the LearnIn logic translate into the regional model/approach and actions?

o To what extent does the LearnIn logic and approach fit with the local contexts (compatible with the challenges, needs, and priorities of the national contexts)?

*Beneficiaries*:

o To what extent was the design of LearnIn relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries?

o To what extent have the challenges, needs and priorities of marginalized and vulnerable groups been considered in the design?

o To what extent have targeted actions been integrated to reach out to those hard to reach?

*Changing circumstances:*

o To what extent does LearnIn adapt to changing internal (within project) or external (outside of project) conditions?

o In how far have gender specific barriers been identified and addressed (based on gender analysis, using a gender action plan, definition of a gender specific objective, and integration of targeted actions)?

**Effectiveness:**

o To what extent is LearnIn likely to achieve, or is expected to achieve, results at different levels of the results chain, including any differentiated results1 across groups?

o To what extent are results expected to be achieved in an inclusive manner supporting the realization of human rights2, and other equity considerations, to ensure that ‘no one is left behind’?

o How does LearnIn address existing barriers as identified in the project document, the gender analysis and the social standards and gender recommendations made at project approval stage?

Methods and data: The evaluation will use rigorous methods to answer the learning agenda questions as well as other questions related to relevance and effectiveness (when they will be defined), notably a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis and will be adapted, as needed, to the changing context. Triangulation of data sources and types will be needed. Like the evaluation questions, the methods may change or be employed differently in order to be agile and responsive. In general data collection would include:

* Document review (including of regional and country level UNICEF digital learning strategies, education strategies from governments, especially related to digital learning, relevant emails, memos, awards, and other existing data).
* Secondary analysis of existing, ongoing assessments, including needs assessments and policy analysis on digital learning.
* Key Informant Interviews.
* Staff and beneficiary surveys.
* Observation/listening in on meetings, calls, strategy sessions
* Process monitoring.

Analytical methods are likely to include:

* Secondary Data Analysis
* Case Studies
* Qualitative Data Analysis.
* Quantitative Data Analysis.
* Data Digest Sessions

As needed, other methods could include process mapping, forcefield analysis, participatory ranking and/or other approaches. Non-experimental evaluation designs, approaches and techniques maybe required to answer accountability/evaluation questions.

# DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR’S RESPONSIBILITIES AND REPORTING:

The Evaluator will contribute to the core group of LearnIn moving through a range of roles such as observer, questioner and facilitator[[12]](#footnote-13). As observer, the evaluator will be watching both content and process. What is being tried? What is being decided? How is it being done? How is it being decided? The primary purpose of making observations is to generate useful feedback for the team. As facilitator, the Evaluator may help move a conversation forward. There are times when a group has sufficiently explored a set of ideas but cannot seem to move forward. By framing and synthesizing these ideas for the group, the Evaluator can help the group to make sense of its deliberations, fine-tune and move on. In the same way, the Evaluator as facilitator supports the group as it interprets data so that it can feed directly into the development process. In some cases, the Evaluator is present in meetings that are not evaluation-focused but instead are specific to project tasks or strategy discussions already taking place. Here, the Evaluator may probe to clarify intent and purpose, or may capture information for use at another time. The Evaluator would not need to be present at every meeting. Debriefing with those who did attend may be useful for clarification and surfacing discrepancies in interpretation.

The Evaluator will have overall responsibility for the design and implementation of the DE and for ensuring its quality. Some responsibilities will include the following:

* Facilitate an Acculturation Workshop for DE partners, which will help to collaboratively conceptualize and develop the DE design and approach (learning framework, methodology, work plans, reporting, etc.).
* Develop a living work plan for the evaluation, including an agreed set of deliverables (which may change over time, depending on the needs).
* Orient and manage other data collection activities as they arise.
* Produce good quality deliverables, including regular intermediate report logs (that track details of DE and document all events that occur — i.e., planned, unplanned, and associated outcomes) and the final report of the evaluation.
* Facilitate regular meetings with programme leadership and other staff to collect data.
* Conduct analysis of the data collected and present digestible analysis regularly to programme staff and key partners through the data-review process and other participatory meetings.
* Track and communicate high-quality information to programme staff, and key partners in on the programme’s progress, which can inform timely and data-driven decision-making; regularly record decision-making, programme changes, and/or changes in the environment in report log.
* Facilitate periodic reflections as to whether the LearnIn TOC continues to hold true over time and determine what changes, if any, may be necessary. The Evaluator will not update the TOC, but rather support the program team to do so if and when deemed appropriate
* Track, document, and help interpret the nature and implications of innovations and adaptations as they unfold
* Facilitate real-time, data-driven decision-making in strategy and across functions
* Provide accountability for external stakeholders and help to refine their contributions as solutions evolve
* Extract lessons and insights from processes and outcomes to inform ongoing adaptive processes
* Provide some capacity building events/exercises on monitoring to ensure data is collected on a regular basis and leveraged for learning and improvement.

The Evaluator will be supported by UNICEF ECARO Education sectionand report to UNICEF ECARO Evaluation section. The ECARO Evaluation section member will be the Evaluator’s manager and act as a DE Administrator with two primary roles: being in charge of launching and overseeing the DE, and providing technical support to the Evaluator. The Administrator will primarily be responsible for the management of the DE, e.g., ensuring adherence to agreed-upon budgets, contracts, and timeline, and etc. The Administrator will also serve as a sounding board for thinking through complex and emergent issues and providing technical and methodological support as required.

# **EVALUATION PROCESS**

The evaluation will be structured in the following main phases defined by accompanying activities as described below:

INCEPTION PHASE

Conduct initial document review: Evaluator will review key LearnIn documents that will help orient to the LearnIn stakeholders and their work. These could include programme design documents, organizational charts, quarterly reports, any outputs of the other MERL components, and etc. The Evaluator should review the documents with an eye toward understanding stakeholder relationships, as well as any data that responds to the draft DE questions. One of the priorities for the Evaluator is establishing her role and key working relationships when such a review will be an important first step.

Conduct initial outreach and introductions and start integrating into the teams. The Education and Evaluation sections will introduce the Evaluator to the stakeholders to ensure that the partners take these introductions seriously. There will be some sequencing of introductions since there are many partners involved, it will help to meet with the leaders and RO first and then attend team meetings to be introduced to everyone else. The Evaluator will start attending regular meetings and getting included on relevant communications (e.g., emails).

Develop a stakeholder map: Using a range of sources (e.g., key document review and initial meetings/interviews), the Evaluator can generate a map that displays relationships within and possibly even beyond the stakeholder group. It will be shared with partners to refine it. The Evaluator can regularly update the map and add to it over the course of the DE e.g. where possible and if data is sufficient, add in the strength of different relationships, any directionality in decision-making, and other information about culture and information flows. It can be done at the RO and/or CO level.

The Evaluator’s understanding of the DE stakeholders may be insufficient to a stakeholder map at this early phase, but the Evaluator should start thinking beyond just who knows who. These maps can not only help the Evaluator understand important dynamics, but also capture the attention and interest of DE stakeholders. Oftentimes, teams will have familiarity with their partners on an individual basis but will not have systematically documented relationships. This documentation and visualization by the Evaluator can help stakeholders identify gaps and opportunities.

Develop A Scope of Work (SOW): based on the activities suggested for the inception stage, the Evaluator will develop an initial Scope of Work (SOW). The content of a preliminary SOW, including the evaluation questions, should be revisited in the early stages of the implementation and during the Acculturation Workshop.

Start refining the questions. DEs are more oriented toward learning and adaptation than accountability and therefore DE evaluation questions and objectives should generally not lead to judgments of success or failure. However, for the sake of this assignment, there will be both learning and accountability questions, and some examples of the latter on relevance and effectiveness are presented. The Evaluator will utilize early conversations with DE partners, as well as document reviews, to start solidifying the potential evaluation and learning questions for the DE. Draft questions will be documented in the preliminary SOW and be refined during the Acculturation Workshop.

Prepare for and conduct Acculturation Workshop. A workshop that convenes DE stakeholders to educate participants about DE, give them a clear understanding of the Evaluator role, refine evaluation questions and begin development of the work plan, and establish common expectations and communication protocols. The Acculturation Workshop is a great place to make final decisions on the questions. It may be helpful to source additional questions from a broader range of DE stakeholders and/or translate DE expectations and learning objectives that are shaped into possible evaluation questions. The Evaluator can then analyze the question input received prior to the workshop and conduct some preliminary grouping, assessing priorities based on different DE stakeholder needs, the context, and any other influencing factors identified during the preliminary data collection.

Produce inception report: At the end of the inception stage, the Evaluator will produce an inception report covering all the key aspects of work and based on the outputs discussed above.

IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Once the inception stage is over, the Evaluator will have conducted a literature review to get acquainted with the program, developed an analysis framework, attended stakeholder meetings, conducted preliminary meetings and interviews with stakeholders, drafted learning and accountability questions and began developing preliminary findings and conclusions, the implementation stage starts.

The implementation stage is about two types of activities that the Evaluator does on the daily basis: evaluative activities and adaptive activities.

**EVALUATIVE ACTIVITIES**

The Evaluator conducts evaluative activities to answer the accountability questions set forth in the DE. These activities often look similar to other evaluation activities, such as interviews, surveys and focus groups, but also require a bit more maintenance given the longevity of a DE and the integrated relationship of an Evaluator. Other evaluative activities include regular data quality assessments; documentation of methods; documentation of all data sources; and regular data cleaning, coding, and analysis. Specific details of evaluative activities will be proposed by the Evaluator and discussed and agreed during the inception stage.

**ADAPTIVE ACTIVITIES**

The Evaluator will facilitate action, change, and adaptation. Collecting data and sharing findings constitute only a small portion of the job as DEs require adaptive activities — facilitation and organizational change support to enable DE participants to implement adaptations. These activities do not start until some evaluation questions are start being answered and DE participants begin to make adaptations. The adaptive activities will also be guided by the learning questions and contribute to the learning component of LearnIn MERL.

Some of the suggested adaptive activities are strategic learning debriefs, pause and reflect sessions (or a similar approach to work with DE stakeholders hand-in-hand to understand evaluation findings and sort and prioritize adaptations), adaptation checklists to help the LearnIn stakeholders keep track of what they have agreed to work on, facilitating organizational change processes through workshops, (e.g., developing strategies, learning systems, or knowledge management frameworks), translating evidence into talking points to help convince leadership of prioritized adaptations, revising the theory of change, indicators, processes, or activities based on recommendations from the DE data and facilitating work-planning for implementing adaptations.

At this stage, it is not possible to divide the following proposed implementation activities into adaptive and evaluative. It is suggested to do so once the DE starts and the Evaluator is on board. Below is some indicative activities:

Revisiting SOW: Given the emergent nature of DE, it does not make sense to develop a detailed plan. However, having an overarching plan will enable Evaluator to make the best use of available time, manage scope, and change course when necessary. After the inception stage, the Evaluator will need to re-visit SOW or any other living work plan and do so occasionally.

Draft complexity map: One of the other activities could be developing a complexity map to study the dimensions of complexity that constitute the dynamic developmental context, e.g., political instability, technological change, new target populations, emergent challenges and etc. This will involve working with stakeholders to understand how the programmes’ traditional silos of intervention interact and overlap in a dynamic environment — e.g., how do economic, political, gender, and other issues interact? Using diverse stakeholder perspectives to map the nature of complexity in the situation can help the DE work unfold.

Collect and analyse data on the potential evaluation questions and expectations across stakeholders of the DE. The Evaluator is expected to conduct a range of activities including staff and beneficiary surveys, interviews, observation/listening and process monitoring. Collected and analysed data will feed it back to stakeholders in digestible and useful formats, and document adaptations that are made. Moreover, the Evaluator will help with capacity building of RO and COs regarding programme monitoring and help UNICEF ensure data is collected on a regular basis and used for learning. As needs shift and questions are answered, the Evaluator will shift their focus to new questions and iterations, as appropriate.

Possible deliverables:

* Memos: Evaluator can save stakeholders time by summarizing information on findings or recommendations in short documents (ideally fewer than five pages). “Options Memos,” a particularly useful tool to summarize findings, possible paths forward and recommendations, and the implications of and resources required for each of the options presented.
* DE Spotlights: Evaluator can succinctly put findings or recommendations into one-page, visually appealing documents that can be shared physically or virtually with stakeholders. These documents should make use of bullets, infographics, icons, or other visual tools to convey key takeaways, which may even entice stakeholders to engage further with the DE.
* Dashboards: Dashboards can provide an easy-to-understand, real-time snapshot of progress along a set of monitoring indicators. Having a visualtool to easily demonstrate the real-time progress, and possible see the differences between the countries will be important.
* Maps: Maps present a great way to visually convey information. DE can produce many types of maps, some that could be relatively simple (i.e., created without needing to purchase costly software) include network maps, heat maps, and timelines
* Case Studies: Is the DE team examining bright spots? Places where implementation is not working? Examples of positive deviance? Illuminating why a decision was taken and how it was implemented? The DE team may create case studies based on qualitative and quantitative data collected and analyzed using transparent and high-quality methods. These can be presented in a variety of way, including on paper, video, or another medium.

The idea is not to produce lengthy reports but produce some effective and reader-friendly products and doing so regularly and frequently to successfully engage the stakeholders. The above list presents some possible examples.

WRAPPING UP STAGE

The closeout process will be tailored thoughtfully to ensure the DE results are sustained over time. During the inception stage, the exist of the DE will be discussed and planned with the stakeholders. Some of the activities to consider for this stage can include outlining a road map for implementation of suggested adaptations, ensuring knowledge management systems are in place to enable information from the DE to be used or referenced; and transitioning key tasks and processes identified as important by the Evaluator among existing staff who will be responsible for promoting and sharing learnings. In addition, creating a simple toolkit for use in future activities or processes could be helpful. Some sort of a final DE report will be developed based on the agreements between DE Administrator and Evaluator.

# **SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND LIMITATION**

The special condition is around the COVID-19 restrictions. Considering the current travel restrictions, the consultant will not be expected to travel.

Limitations include

* Lack of systematic documentation of the design and implementation of some programme interventions may limit the evaluation.
* Due to national contexts and the mandate of the regional office being to support country offices, country offices may each be at an entirely different stage of implementing different components (or sets of components) of LearnIn support
* Due to ongoing structural reforms in some of the governments, a high staff turn-over has been observed in recent years, which does influence availability of institutional memory.
* Not all key informants might be available or reachable at the time of evaluation.
* Evaluation should be conducted without travelling to the country, which will have certain challenges associated with it.

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering UNICEF’s strategic agenda to harness innovation and deepen and widen the evidence base to drive and sustain global progress towards the realization of children’s rights, ensuring ethical conduct in evidence generation is imperative. This is necessary both in its own right and as a significant contributor to ensuring quality and accountability in the evidence generation process, especially when it involves children. The Evaluator shall remain in strict adherence with UNEG ethical guidelines and code of conduct. The Evaluator will be in charge of leading the entire process and be responsible for timely and quality deliverables of the entire process as well as of the evaluation outputs.

Evaluation methodology should be based on UNEG Ethical considerations and respond to UNEG ethical guidance to evaluation as guiding principle to ensure quality of evaluation process (<http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ETHICAL+GUIDELINES>) as well as on Standard Operations Procedures (SOP) for Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards in UNICEF-supported Research, Studies and Evaluations (RSEs) towards Measurable Results for Children in the CEE/CIS Region and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

Evaluator should identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal. If needed, evaluation will go through the regional LTA Ethical Board Review (EBR). Annex 2 lists the sources for the ethical guidelines.

# **WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES**

A tentative time frame for the evaluation is provided below. The evaluation is expected to be completed within **eleven months upon signing the contract**. This might be subject to change depending on the prevailing situation on ground at the time of the evaluation.

Table 3 WorkPlan

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Month 1 | Month 2 | Month 3 | Month 4 | Month 5 | Month 6 | Month 7 | MoNth 8 | MONTH 9 | MONTH 10 | | Month 11 |
| **Inception** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| Initial doc review  Initial outreach and introductions to teams  Stakeholder map  Draft SOW  DE questions  Acculturation workshop  Inception report |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| **Implementation: evaluative and adaptive activities** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| SOW  Complexity map  Collecting and analysing data  Any adaptive activities and outputs (strategic learning debriefs, pause and reflect sessions, adaptive checklists, revised ToC and results framework, etc.)  Producing outputs as agreed during inception stage  Capacity building activities on prog monitoring |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| **Wrapping up** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
| A road map for implementation of suggested adaptations,  Knowledge management systems  Transitioning key tasks and processes  Simple toolkit for use in future activities or processes  Final report |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |

The evaluation process at all stages should follow UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

The Evaluator is responsible to submit the following **Deliverables.**

Table 4 A list of deliverables and tentative person days

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stages** | **Tasks and Deliverables** | **Duration of the tasks proposed by unicef**  **(calendar days/weeks)** | **Proposed person days (international)** |
| **Inception (total 2 months)** | Signing contract; Initial doc review; Initial outreach and introductions to teams; Stakeholder map; Draft SOW; DE questions; Acculturation Workshop; Inception report |  | 40 days |
| **Implementation (total 7 months)** | SOW; Complexity map; Collecting and analysing data; Any adaptive activities and outputs (strategic learning debriefs, pause and reflect sessions, adaptive checklists, revised ToC and results framework, etc.); producing outputs as agreed during inception stage |  | 105 days (15 days a month) |
| **Wrapping up (total 2 months)** | A road map for implementation of suggested adaptations; knowledge management systems; transitioning key tasks and processes; simple toolkit for use in future activities or processes; final report |  | 20 days (10 days a month) |
| **Total** |  |  | 165 days |

The applicants should propose a timeline to submit the deliverables in their implementation plan (in proposals). Necessary and adequate time (at least two weeks) should be allocated for review and quality assurance processes of the key deliverables by the ECARO sections, ERG and External Institution.

# APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND SUGGESTED PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Applicants must submit a technical proposal including their understanding of the assignment, its scope and potential risks and/or areas that may need further clarification during the inception phase; anticipated challenges related to this exercise and mitigation measures; proposed methodology and approach that are best ‘fit for purpose’ for the developmental evaluation; a tentative timeline; ideas to set up the developmental evaluation for the purposes described building on what is already in ToR; approaches to contextualise DE approaches, tools and materials for UNICEF use; list of past and ongoing developmental evaluations carried out by the bidder, accompanied by links to two sample reports.

Payment is contingent on approval by the Evaluation Manager and will be made in three instalments:

1. 30% upon clearance of inception stage deliverables and activities
2. 30% upon clearance of implementation stage deliverables and activities
3. 40% upon clearance of wrapping up stage deliverables and activities

# **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

**UNICEF is seeking to contract an individual consultant corresponding to the following requirements:**

**Required:**

* Advanced university degree, preferably in social science, organizational theory/behavior/communications, international development, or related focus.
* A combination of relevant academic background and relevant work experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree;
* At least 7 years of experience in developing M&E systems, conducting evaluation, and research with extensive technical knowledge, skills, and expertise in evaluation design, concepts, and approaches, and evaluating complexity in particular
* Proven programming and/or evaluation experience in inclusive education or/and digital learning with a focus on marginalized populations preferable;
* Strong facilitation skills, particularly related to programmatic and organizational learning;
* Excellent familiarity with DE, including skills such as respect for local stakeholders and partners, ethical research (maintains confidentiality and anonymity when required), flexibility, energy, humility, willingness to learn on the go, and ability to resolve conflicts;
* Strong analytical skills to support both qualitative and quantitative research;
* Excellent oral and written communication and report-writing skills in English;
* Keen attention to detail, especially related to documenting data and associated processes; and
* Familiarity with UNICEForganizational structure/context.

**Strongly Preferred:**

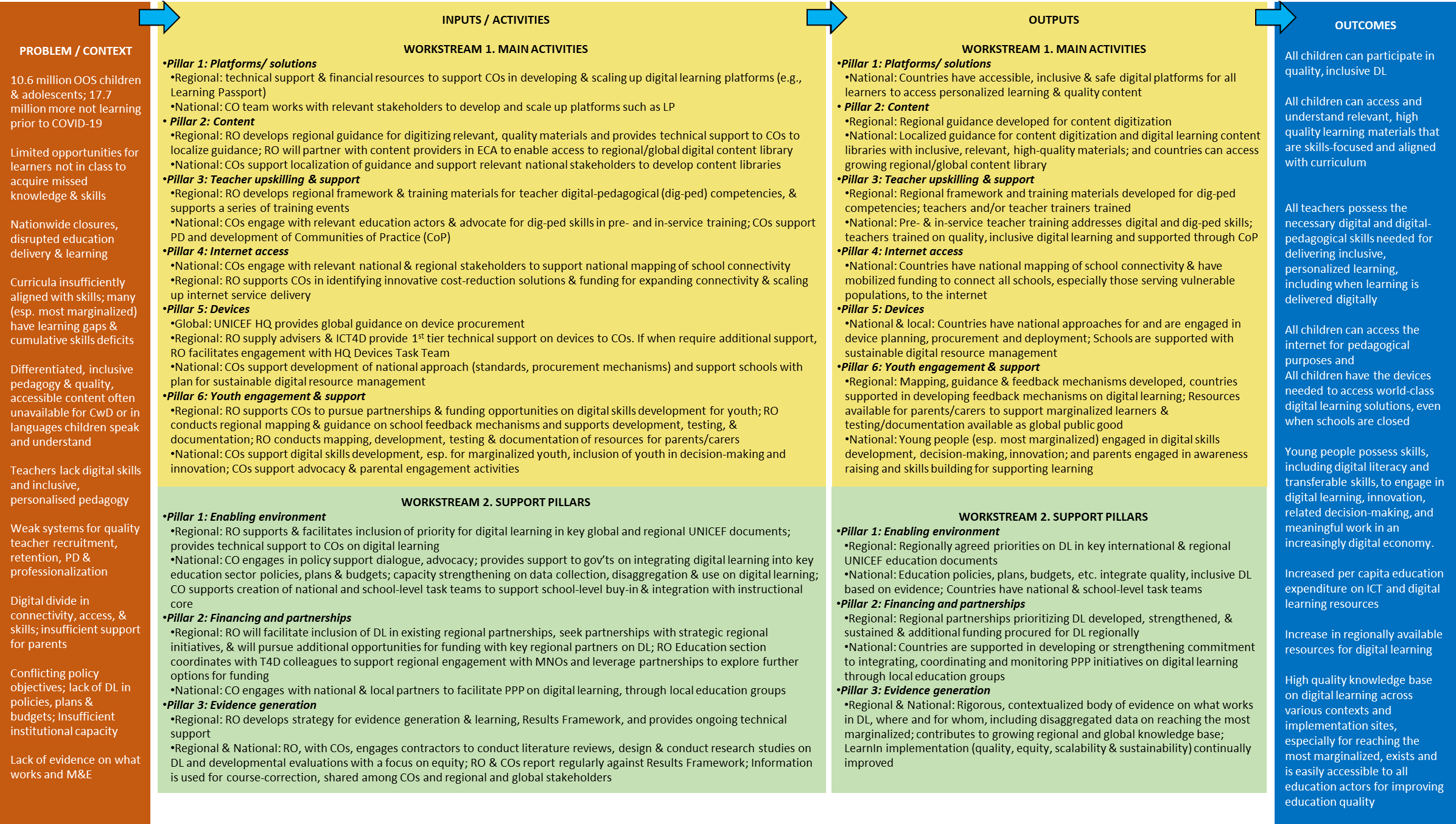
* Leadership and strategic thinking skills;
* Active listening, proactive learning, and time management skills, with readiness to be in a learning role;
* Previous experience and comfort with working for multiple stakeholders with competing priorities/interests; and
* Previous work in ECA region

**Desirable:**

* Skills, capabilities and experience of developing visual outputs as suggested in the ToR
* Skills, capabilities and experience of creating dashboards in R Shiny or other alternatives

ANNEXES

# Annex 1 LearnIn Theory of Change



# Learnin Theory of Change for UNICEF partners

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome 1.1: All children can participate in quality, inclusive digital learning**  This outcome focuses on addressing barriers to accessing quality, inclusive education for all learners, especially the most marginalised, especially when disruption to traditional teaching-learning episodes take place on an individual or large scale. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| If UNICEF RO provides technical support, guidance and, where relevant, financial resources to support COs,  And if COs work closely with national stakeholders to develop and scale up quality digital learning platforms such as Learning Passport | Implementing partners provide guidance and technical capacity on developing and scaling up digital learning platforms that are accessible, flexible and enable technology-enhanced personalised learning; | If the MoE formally adopts or approves the use of digital learning platforms as a component of education service delivery integrated with the instructional core both when in-person learning is not possible and to enhance the reach and quality of traditional learning delivery;  If the MoE provides open access to the approved platform(s) to all schools, teachers and children and young people;  And if the MoE supports schools to provide guidance to teachers, parents and children and young people on how to use the platforms to engage in safe, quality learning; |  | Children and young people can access quality, inclusive learning even when traditional face-to-face learning delivery is not accessible or possible. |

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| **Outcome 1.2 - All children can access and understand relevant, high quality learning materials that are skills-focused and aligned with the curricula**  This outcome builds on the first outcome to address the quality of the learning content to which children and young people have access through digital learning platforms. It focuses on digitizing quality, inclusive, relevant, curriculum-aligned, skills-focused learning content that support children’s learning goals, can be adapted to their learning needs and support high quality learning outcomes that lead to meaningful employment and social and civic engagement. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| If UNICEF ECARO works closely with COs and key content partners to provide guidance for identifying, scoring, curating, localising, aligning and digitising learning materials that are inclusive, relevant and of high quality;  If the RO provides technical support to COs to localize the guidance and to support countries in digitising content;  If COs support the localisation of the guidance with IPs;  And if RO partners with content providers from the ECA region (and as relevant, beyond ECAR) to enable access to global and regional learning content through national digital learning platforms | Implementing partners localise the regional guidance to identify content that is inclusive, relevant, quality, and available in languages children speak and understand;  And if IPs support the MoE to use the guidance to identify content and develop national digital learning content libraries integrated with national digital learning platforms; | If the MoE ensures that the curriculum is skills-based, relevant and aligned with the needs of the labour market;  If the MoE supports schools to provide guidance to teachers on how to access, use the content to develop flexible, personalised learning paths for children;  And if MoE and schools support teachers to supplement the use of national digital learning content library with their own relevant resource creation or sharing | If the private sector is involved in identifying skills needed for the labour market and, accordingly, supporting the development of digital learning content to address skills gaps | Children and young people can access and understand quality, inclusive learning content that supports skills development according to their needs and personal learning pathways, even when traditional face-to-face learning delivery is not accessible or possible. |

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| **Outcome 1.3: All teachers possess the necessary digital and digital-pedagogical skills needed for delivering inclusive, personalized learning, including when learning is delivered digitally;**  This outcome focuses on supporting teachers to deliver high-quality, inclusive teaching, including when learning is technology-enhanced or digitally delivered. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| If UNICEF ECARO works closely with COs, teacher organisations, and government partners to develop a regional, evidence-based framework for teacher competencies for digital learning;  If the RO provides guidance to COs to localize the framework;  If COs support the localisation of the framework as relevant with IPs;  If COs advocate with and support the government to adopt the framework for pre- and in-service teacher professional development; | IPs localise the regional framework within the context of the country, existing teacher competency frameworks and teachers’ needs; | If the MoE adopts the framework and prioritises the integration of teacher’s digital and digital-pedagogical competencies in pre- and in-service development;  If teacher preparation programs reflect these competencies in their curricula and experiential learning for pre-service teachers and schools |  | Pre- and in-service teacher professional development will prioritise teachers’ competencies for providing quality, inclusive digital learning to all children based on international evidence and local needs. |
| If RO develops evidence-based teacher training materials on inclusive digital and digital-pedagogical competencies;  If RO supports a series of training events on providing quality, inclusive digital learning;  And if CO supports the development of and identifies IPs to deliver school-based professional development opportunities on quality, inclusive digital learning and the development of Communities of Practice in and among schools; | If IPs deliver training in line with the framework for teachers’ digital and digital-pedagogical competencies in digital learning;  And if IPs deliver professional development to national task force members (including, for example, trainers and teacher leaders from schools) to implement and sustain teachers’ engagement in Communities of Practice; | If existing pre- and in-service teacher training is high-quality, evidence based, and supports the development of all teachers’ competencies for quality, inclusive learning;  If the MoE supports the scale-up of professional development opportunities for digital learning to reach all pre- and in-service teachers;  If schools support all teachers to access professional development on digital and digital-pedagogical competencies for digital learning;  If schools support teachers to engage in Communities of Practice, offer ongoing support (e.g., mentors) and ongoing, experiential learning through digital platforms integrated with the instructional core;  And if schools help to identify and address barriers to teachers’ participation in these professional development opportunities and Communities of Practice; | If teacher organisations are involved in the development of trainings, identification of teacher needs and development and delivery of Communities of Practice | Then all teachers will be supported to develop the necessary competencies to provide high quality, inclusive, personalised instruction to all learners, including to deliver education digitally and to enhance classroom-based teaching with technology. |

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| **Outcome 1.4 - All children can access the internet for pedagogical purposes**  This outcome is fundamental for the LearnIn theory of change and focuses on the infrastructural and technical need for internet access to enable digital learning. The outcome addresses the need for quality internet connectivity, starting with schools, and its provision through innovative means. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| If RO provides technical support and guidance to COs to engage with relevant national and regional stakeholders;  If COs engage with relevant national and regional stakeholders to initiate a national mapping of school connectivity, including the quality of internet connectivity available;  If COs provide guidance and engage IPs to conduct national mapping;  If COs advocate with government partners for the use of school connectivity mapping together with other data sources (e.g., EMIS) for identifying the most in-need schools | IPs carry out the national mapping on the coverage and quality of school internet connectivity | If MoE uses the data gathered through the national school connectivity mapping and support its integration with other data sources to identify most in-need schools; | If schools support and participate in the regular, accurate collection of relevant data | Countries have up-to-date national data on the coverage and quality of internet access for pedagogical purposes in all schools, including where gaps in coverage and quality may further marginalise vulnerable children |
| If RO supports COs in identifying innovative, viable and relevant cost-reduction solutions and funding sources for expanding connectivity and scaling up internet service delivery (including non-traditional funding sources such as USF or innovative solutions such as using schools as connectivity hubs, single mobile phones as network hubs, or content pushing from school-based computers);  If COs support advocacy among private sector for increasing funding for internet connectivity or among internet providers for increasing availability of low-cost internet access; |  | If MoE engages with other relevant ministries, UN agencies and private sector partners to prioritise the most in-need schools in delivering internet connectivity;  If government adequately budgets for the capital and operating costs, including infrastructure, to connect all schools;  If MoE and other relevant government agencies offer adequate technical capacity for the management / maintenance and monitoring of ICT infrastructure and connectivity in schools | Internet providers and private sector partners support innovating cost-reduction solutions and funding to expand connectivity in a way that is sufficient to reach all schools | All schools can have access to the internet for pedagogical purposes, starting with the most in-need schools to reach the most marginalised children, and can use this connectivity to support digital learning, including when in-person classes are not possible for individuals or entire school communities. |

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| **Outcome 1.5 - All children have the devices needed to access world-class digital learning solutions, even when schools are closed**  This outcome is closely linked with Outcome 1.4 and similarly fundamental for the LearnIn theory of change. It focuses on the devices needed to enable digital learning and addresses their planning, procurement, deployment and maintenance. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| UNICEF HQ provides guidance to COs on device planning, procurement and deployment;  RO supply advisers and ICT4D provide a first tier of technical support on devices to COs and supports COs to engage with the HQ Device Task Team when needed;  COs supports MoEs to develop national approach with standards and procurement mechanisms based on HQ’s Global guidance |  | MoE works closely with UNICEF CO support to develop national approach to device planning, procurement, deployment;  MoE provides the necessary resources for and support (e.g., to schools or other relevant local partners), and guidance on device maintenance;  MoE, where relevant with the support of schools and local partners, establishes regular processes for monitoring to identify and respond to needs related to devices and their functioning. | Private sector partners support innovative cost-reduction strategies for providing devices to children for learning purposes | All children, especially the most marginalised, can have devices that enable them to access digital learning |

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| **Outcome 1.6 - Young people possess skills, including digital literacy and transferable skills, to engage in digital learning, innovation, related decision-making, and meaningful work in an increasingly digital economy.**  This outcome focuses on involving young people in innovation for digital learning, preparing them to be actively involved in and lead digital transitions in their countries and to develop relevant skills for employment, and meaningfully involving them in decisions related to their learning in a digital society. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| IF RO provides technical support and guidance to COs to design and implement meaningful skills development opportunities for young people;  If RO supports COs to pursue regional/national partnerships and funding opportunities related to digital skills development for young people;  If COs work with IPs, governments and local partners to design digital skills development opportunities, with priority on reaching marginalised young people | If IPs, working closely with CO and MoE guidance and with the private sector to ensure relevance, design and implement quality, inclusive skills development opportunities for young people, both integrated with formal education and in non-formal instances; | If MoE prioritises young people’s engagement in supporting the digital transition of society and the economy;  If MoE recognizes young people’s skills development (both formal and non-formal instances) through certification (e.g., microcredentialing), aligned with National Qualifications Frameworks;  If MoE supports schools to identify opportunities within/across the curriculum to offer digital skills development; | If private sector engages with MoE and UNICEF to identify and support the design/ implementation of programs that lead to skills needed for employment; and  If CSOs and other local partners work with MoE, UNICEF, IPs, and private sector to provide high-quality skills development opportunities in non-formal instances; | All young people, especially the most marginalised, will be supported to develop relevant digital skills to support their meaningful engagement in innovation, employment, and social and civic life. |
| If UNICEF CO meaningfully and regularly engages youth through multiple means in decisions related to digital learning;  If UNICEF supports and provides guidance to government partners to do the same; and  If UNICEF promotes such engagement through multiple pathways (communication with youth, schools, parents and the public; government advocacy) |  | If the MoE and other relevant ministries value and commit to including the voices of young people in their planning and programming around digital learning;  If government provides multiple, equitable and inclusive means for young people to be engaged; and  If schools, community centres, parent organisations, and other networks are made aware of opportunities for young people to engage in such conversations and decision-making; | If youth networks and representative bodies are regularly consulted and offered clear paths to engaging with UNICEF and government; and  If these networks equitably prioritise the involvement of the most marginalised and vulnerable young people | Then young people’s needs, concerns and diverse ideas will be equitably and inclusively represented in digital learning decision-making and innovation. |
| If UNICEF RO supports the development, testing and dissemination of resources for engaging parents/carers of the most marginalised children in digital learning;  If COs support advocacy and other related activities to engage parents / carers in awareness raising and skill building activities for supporting digital learning; |  | If governments assess and address the need for parental skill building related to digital learning;  If MoE supports schools to engage parents’ in Communities of Practice and offer teachers guidance on communicating with and engaging parents’ in digital learning;  If schools communicate with and provide guidance to parents on supporting their children’s safe digital learning; | If parent networks and organisations, CSOs, and other partners develop inclusive opportunities and resources for enhancing parents’ digital skills | Parents and carers, especially the most marginalised, will be able to support their children’s quality, safe digital learning, including when learning takes place at home. |
| If UNICEF RO maps school feedback mechanisms, develops guidance for developing school feedback mechanisms and provides support to COs to use the guidance;  If COs use the guidance to provide support through IPs to governments with the development, testing and improvement of feedback mechanisms in digital learning;  If UNICEF COs support advocacy (for MoE/LEGs/schools) to promote the development and implementation of and awareness raising (for parents) on the use of feedback mechanisms for digital learning; | If IPs use the RO guidance and CO support to develop and test school feedback mechanisms for digital learning;  If IPs gather evidence on the equity, use and effectiveness, of these mechanisms; and  If IPs base improvements to such mechanisms on evidence gathered; | If MoE supports local education authorities to  If LEAs are adequately resourced and have the technical capacity to gather, direct to the correct authorities and/or appropriately respond to diverse complaints and feedback;  If schools provide sufficient guidance and support to parents on using feedback mechanisms;  If accountability mechanisms are put in place for timely, quality response procedures at the level of the responsible authority;  And if local feedback mechanisms are integrated (with data anonymization where relevant) with national processes for monitoring digital learning delivery | If parents are adequately supported and prepared to use feedback mechanisms (such as through schools and local parent organisations);  And if parents know to use feedback mechanisms to report complaints or register feedback on digital learning; | Parents and carers will be actively engaged in government accountability for delivering quality, inclusive digital learning. |

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| **Outcome 2.1: Increased per capita education expenditure on ICT and digital learning resources**  **Outcome 2.2 - Increase in regionally available resources for digital learning**  **Outcome 2.3 - High quality knowledge base on digital learning across various contexts and implementation sites, especially for reaching the most marginalized, exists and is easily accessible to all education actors for improving education quality**  These outcomes together focus on strengthening the enabling environment for digital learning, including the priority to digital learning in key strategies and plans, budgeting and financial resources, partnerships and the availability and use of evidence on what works, for whom, where and how in digital learning. | | | | |
| IF  (UNICEF prioritized action) | And  (Implementing partners) | And  (Government) | And  (Other) | Then |
| If UNICEF RO supports and facilitates the inclusion of priority for digital learning in global strategic plan, regional workplans, regional flagship result and other key UNICEF documents;  If CO engages in policy support, dialogue and advocacy and provides support to governments on integrating digital learning into education sector policies, plans, budgets and reforms;  If CO supports capacity strengthening with MoE and other relevant education actors including LEGs and schools on collecting, disaggregating, analysing, and using digital learning data;  If COs through IPs support the creation of national and school-level task teams to support school buy-in and integration of digital learning in instructional core of schools | If IPs support the creation of national and school level task teams to strengthen local and national buy-in for digital learning | If governments include digital learning as a priority and in an integrated way (rather than as separate from general education delivery) in education sector policies, plans, budgets and reforms;  If MoE guarantee adequate and equitable financing for digital learning; | If private sector, parent and youth organisations put pressure on government to prioritise digital learning and digital skills development | Then regional and national priorities will reflect digital learning as a key component of providing quality, inclusive learning to all children, including the most marginalised and governments will be supported at the national and local level with task teams that facilitate its implementation and strengthen buy-in |
| If UNICEF RO facilitates the inclusion of digital learning within existing regional partnerships, seeks partnerships with regional initiatives and strengthens the focus on digital learning in strategic engagement with regional partners;  If RO pursues additional opportunities for funding with key regional partners and IFIs;  If Education section at RO coordinates with T4D colleagues to support regional engagement with MNOs based on UNICEF global agreements and RO leverages such partnerships to explore further options for funding;  If CO engages with national and local partners to facilitate PPP on digital learning; |  | If governments commit to and ensure integration, coordination and monitoring of PPP initiatives on digital learning through local education groups;  If MoE and UNICEF ensure that resources are effectively managed, used catalytically and focused on delivering equitable, effective and sustainable digital learning, and if economies of scale are leveraged; | If regional partners prioritise digital learning, especially for reaching the most marginalised;  If regional partners make funding available for digital learning in ECAR, specifically for the priorities outlined in UNICEF ECARO’s LearnIn Implementation Plan, with a focus on reaching the most marginalised;  If funding is sustainable and priority on digital learning maintained beyond COVID-19 and for longer term system resilience and strengthening | Then regionally available resources for digital learning will increase and support funding of national digital learning activities/programs to strengthen quality, inclusive education systems, especially for the most marginalised. |
| If UNICEF ECARO provides a clear strategy for evidence generation and learning, guidance and technical support on monitoring;  If RO together with COs engage contractors to conduct research on digital learning across contexts;  If RO engages contractors to conduct both developmental and impact evaluations;  If both RO and CO report regularly against indicators outlined in the LearnIn Results Framework;  And if RO and CO coordinate to share and use evidence generated for course correction among other UNICEF offices as well as MoE, IPs, regional and global stakeholders; | If contractors use rigorous methodologies to conduct high quality research and evaluations | If MoE, using strengthened capacity from UNICEF and IPs, develops quality processes for gathering, analysing and using data on digital learning |  | Then rigorous, contextualized evidence will be available on what works in digital learning, where and for whom in ECAR, including disaggregated data on reaching the most marginalized populations;  Then LearnIn implementation (quality, equity, scalability & sustainability) will be continually improved using this evidence; and  This evidence will contribute to a growing regional and global knowledge base on quality digital learning. |

# LearnIn Theory of Change assumptions and risks

**Programme assumptions** are the assumptions within the programme’s sphere of influence. They are assertions about the programme being able to implement an intended process and deliver key outputs that are important to bring about change. These include that the UNICEF Regional Office is adequately resourced to support implementation in all relevant countries and that the UNICEF Regional Office and Country Office prioritize equity for reaching the furthest behind, not only in monitoring and evaluating the reach and impact of LearnIn but also in regional and country level planning, implementation activities, and advocacy. Another programme assumption is that Country Programme Documents and Country Offices’ planned activities align with LearnIn’s Theory of Change and that activities planned and implemented at the country level support the operationalization of LearnIn according to the Implementation Plan. Depending on activities implemented within each country context, additional programme assumptions must be considered. For example, in countries using digital learning platforms to deliver quality content for learners, a key assumption is that the necessary connectivity and accessible devices are available to all learners. Otherwise, equity gaps are likely to grow as some children access quality learning and the most vulnerable remain further marginalized.

**External assumptions** are the assumptions over which the programme has no control but which are essential for the cause and effect relationships to hold true. These include that initial buy-in from Ministries of Education to implement LearnIn within the instructional core of schools is present and sufficient to support further buy-in from other key stakeholders, namely schools and teachers. These assumptions also include that interest in and funding for digital learning will be adequately maintained to fund scale up of best-fit activities based on evidence generated for each context. LearnIn Implementation furthermore assumes that efficient collaboration between key stakeholders will be maintained, including commitment to supporting the dissemination of lessons learned from LearnIn implementation and their use for educational policy and planning.

**Causal assumptions** are those which link effects with causes and the chain of results. A primary causal assumption is that strengthening countries’ digital learning ecosystems improves their resilience to crises by enabling them to ensure continuity in education service delivery that leads to high-quality learning outcomes, whether instruction takes place face-to-face or at a distance.

This assumption can be broken down into other assumptions involved in effecting this change. The ToC assumes that **designing digital learning to be integrated within the instructional core of schools** (i.e., the interactions among teachers, learners, and content with which teachers and students are already familiar) **allows it to be used as a tool to address multiple challenges in providing quality education**. This includes that education technology can be used to improve teaching practice by focusing on digital-pedagogical competencies, as this technology can facilitate experiential learning for teachers as they implement digital learning with their own classes. Integrating digital learning within the instructional core also enables improving learners’ access to content that is inclusive, relevant, available in languages that children can use and understand, and aligned with the curriculum. Moreover, integrating these tools within the instructional core allows them to be used to deliver this learning content in a way that is tailored to each child’s unique needs and learning goals, enabling more personalized learning.

**The ToC assumes that improving access to relevant learning materials, personalized learning pathways, and quality, inclusive instruction can improve the quality and equity of learning outcomes.** **It assumes that increasing the number of children accessing such support through digital learning, while improving learning continuity across situations and modalities, will accelerate learning improvement across the education system and across children’s life course**. Importantly, the ToC also assumes that access to devices and internet connectivity must be expanded, especially among the most vulnerable populations, if such technology-enhanced learning opportunities are to improve learning outcomes for all children rather than to increase equity gaps.

At the same time, the ToC recognizes that such integration of digital learning within the instructional core is not possible nor sustainable without adequate buy-in from key stakeholders across all levels of the education system. It assumes that recognizing digital learning as a tool for improving education quality and equity within UNICEF’s regional priorities and strategies enables the allocation of technical and financial resources to support Country Offices in their work with governments. The **policy support, analysis, ongoing dialogue, and advocacy at the country level (in this case by UNICEF) can support the inclusion of digital learning in key national education policies, plans, and budgets, which can support its legitimacy among actors also at the local and school levels and its sustainability over time**. It assumes that UNICEF Country Office support to education authorities can strengthen their capacities to collect, disaggregate, and use data on digital learning, which—paired with complementary efforts in evidence generation led by UNICEF at the regional, national, and local levels—can help to improve the effectiveness, equity, scalability, and sustainability of these programs. Finally, the ToC assumes that developing and strengthening global, regional, and national partnerships for digital learning will provide funding that is catalytic to support the sustainability of digital learning initiatives and their scaling up, as will the revision of education budgets to integrate digital learning.

## Risks

Risks include that global awareness of the importance of digital learning decreases as the threat of COVID-19 reduces and that government commitment to digital learning will be insufficient or will not be sustained. There is also the risk that resources will be insufficient to reach set targets, along with political risk from the private sector in that some large technology companies may own too much influence on education policies or programmes. At the same time, an inadequate focus on equity alongside digitalization may lead to further exclusion of the most marginalized children while contributing to, rather than helping to reduce, the growing digital divide.

LearnIn aims to support Country Offices to localize UNICEF’s global digital learning agenda. There are additional risks at the national and local levels that digital learning may be seen as a set of ad hoc activities relevant only when face-to-face learning cannot take place rather than a systems approach to improving learning outcomes. LearnIn aims to mitigate this risk by situating support within the instructional core of schools, Finally, it is critical that LearnIn is understood as the regional operationalization of the global digital learning initiative, *Reimagine Education*. Without this clarity, key opportunities to leverage existing partnerships, share evidence and lessons learned, and coordinate support to accelerate results for children may be lost.

If the assumptions described above do not hold true, they present a certain risk to the success of the programme. Key risks will need to be actively monitored to allow LearnIn management to take necessary actions to avoid or mitigate the risk and adapt as needed.

# Annex 2 Ethical guidelines and considerations

**The evaluation process should adhere to the United Nations evaluation norms and standards and Ethical Guidelines for evaluation available at:**

* http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc\_cat\_source\_id=4.
* http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ETHICAL+GUIDELINES
* http://www.unevaluation.org/document/library

**The evaluation should be consistent** with The Procedure for Ethical Standards in UNICEF Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis and is complemented by, and builds on, the pre-existing Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practice for UNICEF Research and the Evaluations Technical Note No. 1, Children Participating in Research, Monitoring And Evaluation (M&E) — Ethics and Your Responsibilities as a Manager, UNICEF Evaluation Office, 2002.

**Reference documents:**

* UNICEF (2020) Ethical Considerations for Evidence Generation Involving Children on the COVID-19 Pandemic, Innocenti Discussion Papers no. 2020-01, UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence
* UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis CF/PD/DRP/2015-001(UPES).
* UNICEF Evaluation Office “UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards”, July 2010
* UNICEF Evaluation Office “Guidance on equity-focused evaluations - Strengthening equitable results for children”, September 2011
* UNICEF Evaluation Office “Internal guidance for management response to evaluations – Enhancing critical engagement for the strategic use of evaluations” December 2009
* UNEG “Guidance Document - Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations” August 2014

1. In ECA, more than 10.8 million children and adolescents remain out of school, with many more in school yet out-of-learning. Of the ten ECA countries that participated in PISA 2015, all performed significantly below the OECD average, with students from the region typically scoring 2.5 years behind their OECD peers. On average, 47 percent, 52 percent, and 54 percent reach basic proficiency in proficiency in math, reading, and science, respectively, compared to the OECD average of 77 per cent, 80 per cent, and 79 per cent. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. While the initial ToC was intended to be updated with a specific number of children to be reached through the regional initiative, this number has not yet been established due to the model via which the initiative is being rolled out in the region. As each country is able to choose areas of support from the regional package based on national and local needs, and as each country is at a different point in implementation, a concrete number has not yet been established. The team would like to request that the developmental evaluation support the establishment of an impact figure. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Andrabi, T., Daniels, B., Das, J. 2020. Human Capital Accumulation and Disasters: Evidence from the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005. RISE Working Paper Series. 20/039. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP\_2020/039. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Matt Brossard, Manuel Cardosoii, Akito Kamei, Sakshi Mishraiii, Suguru Mizunoya and Nicolas Reuge (2020) Parental Engagement in Children’s Learning. Innochenti Research brief. 2020-09 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/five-findings-new-phone-survey-senegal> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.educationnext.org/google-search-data-reveals-about-learning-pandemic/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/ECAR-HN/SitePages/COVID-19.aspx#covid-19-ecar-education-response> (unicef education response summary round 2, April 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://riseprogramme.org/blog/developing-country-schools-reopen> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. ECAR COVID-19 Education Response Questionnaire. (2020). Results available at <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/ECAR-HN/SitePages/Questionnaire-results.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. UNICEF ECARO. (2021). *Building resilient education systems beyond the COVID-19 pandemic: Second set of considerations for school reopening.* Available at https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/17306/file/Building%20resilient%20education%20systems%20beyond%20the%20COVID-19%20Pandemic\_%202021.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. This ToR was prepared based on and inspired by the excellent USAID publication ‘Implementing Developmental Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Evaluators and Administrators. (2019) U.S. Agency for International Development’. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Jamie A.A. Gamble (2008) A developmental Evaluation Primer. [untitled (mcconnellfoundation.ca)](https://mcconnellfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/A-Developmental-Evaluation-Primer-EN.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)