

UNICEF Moldova
Terms of Reference

National Individual Consultancy: Project Assistant

Project Title: Digital Innovation of Moldovan Education System

Location: Chişinău, Moldova (outposted to the Ministry of Education and Research)

Start Date of Consultancy: November 2022

Duration of contract: 11,5 months (with possible extension, based on performance evaluation)

Type of employment: Full-time

1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic underlined the importance of digital transformation globally and nationally. In response to these new challenges, digital innovation and transformation became one of the highest priorities for the Moldovan system of education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during lockdowns, many students did not have access to ICT and were unable to continue their education online due to lack of devices, connectivity issues, as well as limited teacher knowledge of, and experience with online learning and teaching methods and lack of digital skills. Despite a rapid response, the COVID-19 pandemic had a marked impact on education. Reports¹ indicated that most pre-existing vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Most socially disadvantaged children experienced the greatest challenges in accessing remote education.
- Despite government and donor efforts, there is still a shortage of available IT equipment and disparities in access to devices, with 75% of vulnerable children and youth lacking devices, and 50% not being connected to the internet.
- Around 7% of children were enrolled in a school that was not able to ensure remote learning, and 21% in schools that ensured it only partially.
- Remote learning remained a challenge for about 16,000 students and 3000 teachers which do not have access to ICT technology.

To ensure the continuous and sustained access to education for all children and in line with Moldovan authorities' efforts to achieve the objectives of SDG4, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) in cooperation with UNICEF, as Grant Agent for Education Sector Programme Implementation Grant (ESPIG) under the partnership with Global Partnership for Education (GPE), has developed a new long-term "Education 2030" Development Strategy which is under finalization. One of the objectives of the new education strategy is to facilitate the digital transformation of the education sector.

To achieve this important goal, UNICEF supported MER to develop a funding proposal and a programme, and successfully secured financing through the GPE Multiplier Fund for 2022-2025. The funding will be solely used for digital transformation of the education sector. Based on a competitive process and its valuable experience

¹ https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/inclusive_growth/social-and-economic-impact-assessment-of-covid-19-in-the-republi.html

and expertise in education globally and nationally, UNICEF was identified as Grant Agent (GA) for the Multiplier Fund.

The Multiplier Grant will be used to establish the education ICT/Digitization policy and strategic framework which will allow for a prioritized approach to providing ICT resources from the programme to the most disadvantaged. In the medium-term, it is expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes, retention of children in the system, increased enrolment of minorities and greater system efficiency through timely evidence-based decision making, improved access for the most vulnerable and improved learning outcomes across the sector as a result more children accessing better digital learning materials managed by trained teachers.

In the longer run, the Multiplier Grant Programme is expected to improve the way in which ICT is used through identifying the core areas of the curriculum that can benefit from digital support and provide the materials and strategies for teachers to use them. Also, the system efficiency will be improved by better data collection and use by managers and administrators, through strengthening the current Education Management Information System (EMIS) and building the data management capacities of relevant staff. In this context, a modality to follow children through the system and so better identify children at risk of falling behind or dropping out of school will be established.

To implement the above-mentioned programme, a Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) will be established to assist MER, therefore UNICEF is seeking for the national consultant who will serve as a Project Assistant to coordinate relevant activities.

2. Purpose of the assignment of the consultancy

Provide support in programme implementation and execution of administrative tasks of the Multiplier Grant Programme. He/she will support the development and maintenance of an effective administrative and reporting environment that facilitates the achievement of programme goals and objectives.

The consultancy is expected to be carried out within the period November 2022 – September 2023 (with possibility of extension).

3. Objectives of the consultancy

- Provide support to programme implementation, guaranteeing quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the administrative deliverables.
- Support the Project Manager (PM) in the effective planning, monitoring and evaluation activities of the Multiplier Grant Programme.

The Project Assistant will support the PIU activities under the guidance of Project Manager (PM), ensuring quality and results by providing assistance and taking on administrative duties.

4. Details of how the work should be delivered

The Project Assistant will become a member of the PIU and along with other complementary personnel, Project Manager (PM), M&E Specialist and Finance and Procurement Specialist, will work together as a team to achieve the programme outcomes. The Project Assistant will report directly to the Project Manager (PM).

Under the supervision of Project Manager (PM), the incumbent will be responsible for providing administrative assistance in the implementation of the Multiplier Grant Programme and work with the direct implementers in the MER, Office of the Deputy-Prime Minister for Digitalization, Ministry of Finance, LPAs, national and international NGOs, private sector etc. The focus will be on the provision of comprehensive and administrative support to the Project Manager (PM), PIU and MER in all matters relating to the implementation of the Multiplier Grant Programme, by seeing that all aspects of the project are dully attended to and completed at the right time.

5. Deliverables

Tasks	Deliverable	Timeline*
Assistance in elaboration of the Programme Operation Manual (POM) and the Multi-Annual Workplan (MAWP)	POM and MAWP elaborated and approved	By end of December 2022
Support in establishing project account	Project account secured	By end of December 2022
Organization of the meeting of the Steering Committee (MGPSC) to approve POM and MAWP	MGPSC meeting organized Minutes of the meeting signed with MER and UNICEF	January 2023
Assistance in the development of Terms of Reference for consultants and contractors	ToRs prepared	Throughout the year, as per MAWP
Insurance of the successful administrative support of the Multiplier Grant through the development of records, orders, drafts, translations, minutes, and other administrative documents as required**	Administrative documents available	Throughout the year, as per MAWP

*** Exact deliverables and deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.**

**All the materials for the workshops and consultation meetings, including agendas, lists of participants with confirmation of attendance, PPTs, hand-outs and others will be presented for endorsement to MER and UNICEF 5 working days prior to the meeting in Romanian and English. The minutes and report on meetings will be presented to MER and UNICEF three working days after the event, in English and Romanian.

Annexes will include, but not be limited to:

- Bibliography of all sources of information consulted
- Comprehensive list of stakeholders involved in the analysis
- TOR for the consultancy
- Relevant tables, statistics, graphs etc.

The Project Assistant shall:

a) Fulfill main administrative tasks as described, but not limited to:

- Assist the Project Manager (PM) with administrative activities.
- Keep daily records of both hard copy and electronic correspondence, fax messages, registration of official acts (orders, dispositions, letters) and internal correspondence.
- Undertake administrative duties such as preparing and ensuring receipt and issuance of correspondences for internal and external stakeholders; maintain an efficient filing system of technical documents and of all official correspondence.

- Proofread correspondences including reports, templates, training material, staff manuals, memoranda, and documents.
- Provide support to PIU in areas of organization, logistics, administration, report preparation, handling consultants, visits, missions.
- Screen incoming daily routine emails and drafting replies for PIU; providing relevant background information whenever necessary to PIU; keeping track of pending matters, following up on deadlines.
- Assist in organization of events such as trainings, meetings, conferences, workshops; drafting and sending invitations and confirming participation of attendees; preparing minutes.

b) Support provided by the consultant in the work of MER is very important as the essential part of the programme documentation is in English and needs to be translated into Romanian (or vice versa). The main translation tasks for the assistant will be related to:

- Translation of documents, including official correspondence, per the request of the MER and the Project Manager (PM).
- Translation of project reports, Bidding Documents' Annexes, ToRs and any other documents issued by the MER with regard to the Multiplier Grant Programme in order to be submitted for Local Education Group (LEG), MGPSC and GA's review and approval.

c) Other tasks:

- Assist LEG, MGPSC, project consultants and MER responsible staff in collection and analysis of data, upon request.
- Assist LEG, MGPSC, project consultants in timely preparation and submission of progress reports, project reviews, financial reports, and any other required reports.

6. Reporting requirements

The Project Assistant will report directly to the Project Manager (PM). He/she will assist the Project Manager (PM) in writing quarterly narrative reports and annual reports for progress review, agreement of adjustments and changes to the next quarter activity plan by the MGPSC.

The UNICEF Education Officer (NOB) will regularly communicate with the Project Assistant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support to achieve objectives of the consultancy, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to his/her performance and quality of work.

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the incumbent shall be discussed and planned in consultation with Project Manager (PM). The assistant is expected to deliver each component of the workplan electronically (in Word format) and in English. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Project Manager (PM), with the UNICEF Education Officer (NOB) in copy.

7. Performance indicators for evaluation of results:

The performance of work will be evaluated based on the following indicators:

- Completion of tasks specified in ToR
- Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables
- Quality of work

- Demonstration of high standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF and counterparts

8. Qualifications and experience

- University degree in Social Sciences or Economics, or any other field related to the assignment.
- At least 5 years of similar professional experience as a project assistant in a project environment either in the government agencies or in the private sector.
- Experience in ensuring logistical and administrative management of various similar projects. Familiarity with and/or experience in the UN, World Bank financed projects and EU-funded projects is an asset.
- Excellent organizational skills and ability to prioritize tasks.
- Excellent interpersonal and communications skills.
- Previous work experience as a translator in projects financed by international organizations will be an asset.
- Advanced knowledge of English and strong writing skills required.
- Fluency in Romanian and working knowledge of Russian is required.

9. Content of technical proposal

- Cover Letter containing information on similar experience and assignments, references in the past 5 years (max. 300 words)
- CV (*Curriculum Vitae*)

Annex: Short Sample or links to related work previously conducted by the consultant, evidence in the form of job completion certificate, contracts and/or references.

10. Content of financial proposal

The financial proposal shall specify an all-inclusive monthly fee in MDL requested for the tasks described in the present ToR, based on the full-time work schedule envisaged. The payments will be rendered based on the monthly reports on performed duties and implemented activities.

The final selection will be based on the principle of “best value for money” i.e., achieving desired outcome at lowest possible fee.

If not provided by ToR, UNICEF will not reimburse costs not directly related to the assignment. This contract does not allow payment of medical insurance, taxes, and sick leave.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/output is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.

11. Evaluation criteria for selection

The candidate is expected to reflect in the submission the qualifications, knowledge and experience related to the requirements listed above. Technical evaluation will be performed through a desk review of applications, evaluation of technical proposals, and will be supplemented by an interview.

The total amount of points to be allocated for the price component is 30. The maximum number of points

(30) will be allotted to the lowest price proposal of a technically qualified offer. Points for other offers will be calculated as $\text{Points (x)} = (\text{lowest offer} / \text{offer x}) * 30$.

The selection process is aimed at selecting the applicant who obtains the highest cumulative score (technical evaluation + financial offer evaluation points) following “best value for money” principle.

12. Payment schedule

The payments will be rendered monthly, as per the agreed fee and consistent to the numbers of days worked, after approval of deliverables reflected in the contract and, subsequently, as approved and reflected in the monthly task schedules, in line with the specifications of the p.5 above.

All deliverables must be timely submitted, in line with the agreed timeliness’ of the monthly priority schedules, as specified under p.5 above. Monthly reports must be approved in writing by UNICEF before payment is effectuated.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs are incomplete, not delivered for failure to meet deadlines.

Deliverable (delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)	Proportion of payment
November 2022 – September 2023	Monthly fee payable at the end of each month

13. Definition of supervisory arrangements

The Project Assistant will carry out his/her functions under the direct supervision of the Project Manager (PM). During key stages (design, implementation, data analysis, report writing and quality assurance of all final deliverables), he/she will be under the oversight of the Director of the Programme (Minister or State Secretary) and GA.

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the selected candidates and provide formats for reports, feedback and guidance on performance and all other necessary support to achieve objectives of the research, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to expert’s performance and quality of work.

14. Work arrangements and official travel involved

The incumbent will serve in the located offices of MER and assist the PIU to ensure effective delivery of project activities, outputs, and results. Home-based teleworking as a temporary alternative working arrangement can be applied whenever necessary, although not on a full-time basis.

MER will provide the Consultant with necessary support to complete the assignment: project documents necessary for assignment accomplishment, necessary work conditions, including office space, telephone, fax and other office equipment and supplies.

The work will require local travels to conduct in-person visits and interviews with the different local authorities, as per their availability. The UNICEF office will facilitate introductions to key informants.

The Individual Contractor will be entitled to Paid Time Off (PTO) credit at the rate of one-half days (1.5 days) for each full month of service, to be credited on the last calendar day of the month.

15. Support provided by UNICEF

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the specialist and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support so to achieve objectives of the programme, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to the performance and quality of work.

UNICEF will provide an initial package of relevant documents and available research. UNICEF will also request relevant data – as agreed upon with the consultant – from relevant government counterparts.

16. Child Safeguarding

Is this project/assignment considered as “Elevated Risk Role” from a child safeguarding perspective? YES NO If YES, check all that apply:

17. Ethical considerations

The Contractor will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines². The Contractor should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Contractor should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Assessment, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The Contractor is allowed to use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

As per the DHR PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS, together with the Notification letter, the contractor will be sent the link on UNICEF’s learning platform, Agora, containing UNICEF policies on Prohibiting and Combatting Fraud and Corruption; Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority and other relevant policies for their information and acknowledgment. The selected candidate must complete the applicable mandatory online courses on UNICEF’s learning platform prior to signature of contract. All certificates should be presented as part of the contract.

18. Other considerations

Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

The selected candidate is solely responsible to ensure that the visa (if applicable) and health insurance required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract.

Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF

² UNEG Guidelines <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/102>

premises, programme delivery locations, or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.

UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.