

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR LOCAL CONSULTANCY

Junior Expert for the Equity and Fairness-Oriented Analysis of School Classroom Assessment Practices to Identify Policy Recommendations for Improvement of Student Learning Outcomes

Individual Consultant is expected to perform this assignment remotely (home based) with possible field missions as required.

Duty Station: Yerevan, Armenia

Supervisor: Education Specialist, Education Officer (GPE), Team Leader

Time-frame: from early May to early December (approx. 7 months)

Purpose of Activity/Assignment:

The aim of the assignment is to support improvement of Armenia's classroom assessment policy and practices through comprehensive analysis and policy recommendations to implement assessment for learning that is fair and equitable to all students. Under this assignment, the Junior Expert, working within a team of dedicated experts and guided by Team Leader, will be responsible for collecting the data and supporting the Team Leader in analyses of school classroom assessment practices to generate evidence-based policy recommendations for improvement of student learning outcomes in Armenia. This assessment envisages both secondary review of existing data, desk-research and primary data collection/analysis.

These activities will contribute to the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Target 4.6. which requires states to "ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy." At the global level, the agenda around the SDG 4 to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by 2030, has reinforced a focus on learning assessment to gain data on learning that allow to establish and monitor education quality and learning progress.

The specific objectives under this assignment are:

- a) to complete a robust and comprehensive literature review, followed by an overview of local legal framework and existing regulations, comprehensive desk-research and secondary analysis of existing raw data and relevant statistics;
- b) to design the methodology and the tools for data collection from the key stakeholders and beneficiaries, including local and regional actors, such as the education departments of regional authorities, teachers, students and other target groups;
- c) to manage the quantitative data collection and quality control of survey among teacher through the National Center of Educational Technologies (NCET) of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia (MESCS);
- d) to collect and analyze the qualitative data from students, teachers and school leadership, as well as analysis and reporting of primary data from the assessment through close collaboration with UNICEF and MESCS.

The analysis shall seek to explore:

- What would be the optimal theory and practice of classroom assessment as proposed by advanced international scholarly work and practice;
- To what extent is the current classroom assessment practice fair to and promotes equitable learning for all students;
- What are the key stakeholder views and understandings of classroom assessment, both in practice and in theory, and how they compare to the advanced international literature and practice reviewed;
- What are the key constraints and resources (current or required) to increase the quality of classroom assessment that is fair and promotes equitable learning for all students;
- The extent to which the contexts and assessment programmes are consistent with other elements of the wider education system, for example with learning standards and curriculum, the structure of the education system, national education priorities.

Key stakeholders of the assignment are the government line ministries, namely the Ministries of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MoTAI), MESCS, sub-national and local authorities, UNICEF, EU and dedicated CSOs.

- The knowledge generated by the study should be used by UNICEF Armenia to inform and amplify its future activities and projects in the country and will also be used by other national stakeholders to further refine the quality, cohesiveness and timeliness of policies in the field of general education.

Scope of Work:

Context

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

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

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

Responsibilities in the Team

The Junior Expert will be responsible for supporting the Team Leader and Senior Experts in desk research, reviewing desk data and key literature upon the Team Leader's request and based on approved and pre-defined approach of the Team, supporting the instrument design and quality control of data collection, assisting in the primary qualitative data collection, recruiting participants and assisting moderation of focus group discussions (FGs), elaborating the transcripts of Key expert and key informant interviews (KEI, KII) and supporting the analysis of secondary data and survey results, as part of the technical working group composed of two Senior and two Junior Experts to be supervised by the Team Leader. The full set of reporting documents produced by the Team should adhere to UNICEF quality assurance standards and be developed and submitted in a timely manner.

The Consultant will be personally responsible for collection of primary data, its duly recording, quantitative data entry, transcription, analysis and support in preparation of summaries and draft reports for further development by the Team Leader. S/he will also be tasked with supporting senior experts in preparing short memos and presentations for consultation meetings with key stakeholders.

International expertise will be available for guidance and orientation to globally available resources and methodologies. UNICEF will organize thematic orientation sessions and consultations. This assignment is within the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Education Sector Development Programme Grant-a joint UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports initiative to be implemented during 2021-2022.

Methodology

The study methodology shall follow a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection to obtain rich insights, address all the objectives of the assignment and to assure triangulation of data sources and data collection methods. The detailed methodology allowing for collection of all required information with detailed sampling strategy, study instruments and analytical approach should be developed by the Team at the end of the inception phase and submitted to UNICEF in a form of a Study Protocol for approval and quality assurance.

The quantitative data should be utilized through secondary review of national external assessments aimed at monitoring classroom summative assessment, as well as other existing stakeholder surveys. Also, a survey among schoolteachers via standardized questionnaires should be developed and administered online in collaboration with NCET. Only teachers, that have received grading (first, second, third or fourth) should be targeted by the survey. Total number of the sample frame is around 500 teachers. Final decision on the sample design should be reached in the Inception Phase in close collaboration with UNICEF to either proceed with a census approach or with a stratified random probability sampling, specifically controlling for rural/urban, consolidated/non-consolidated, borderline/high-mountainous settlements and reserving a quota for the three large cities.

The qualitative data should be collected through remote stakeholder semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussions (FGDs) with the following target groups: students of 14-17 years old age group, teachers, principals, vice principals, school board members, school assessment guideline providers. Total number of key informant and key expert interviews (KIIs and KEIs) planned for the study is around 10-15 per each target group. Around total of 5-10 FGDs, with up to 8 participants each, should be administered. Details of sampling approach, sample sizes and recruitment of participants should be developed by the Consultant, presented in the Study Protocol and discussed with UNICEF Armenia team prior to approval.

The analysis should concentrate on a comprehensive and holistic overview of the assessment policy and practices in Armenia as well as the national learning assessment system as a whole, identify gaps within the system and propose targeted and both theory-driven and empirically proven solutions to each of these challenges. It should include the analysis of secondary data received from NCET and/or NATC, consultations with key stakeholders, including local and regional actors, such as the education departments of regional authorities adjacent to the MoTAI, as well as gathering, analysis and reporting of data according to the methodologies presented above.

The final reports should incorporate the main learnings from all stages and provide concrete and accurate policy solutions for the MESCS to pursue. More information on the technical requirements for each report will be provided to successful candidates.

Ethical Considerations

The assessment approach and data collection and analysis methods should focus on gender and human rights aspects, be responsive and appropriate for analyzing the gender equality, human rights issues, including child rights issues. Gender equality, equity and human rights considerations will be further elaborated by the Consultant and the Team during the inception phase and addressed across the final reports. Ethical dimensions should be taken into consideration by the Team, discussed and measures taken to ensure those. More specifically, prior to conducting interviews the respondents' informed consent should be ensured, age-appropriate language and approaches to data collection involving children should be used. The anonymity and confidentiality of individual data will be protected, and ethical guidelines will be followed as set out by United Nations (UN) Evaluation Group in its standards and norms. Adherence

to the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis¹, Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practice for UNICEF Research² and Technical note on Children Participating in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation³ should be ensured by the team.

¹ See UNICEF Procedure for Quality Assurance in Research CF/PD/DRP/2015-002 https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF

² See Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practice for UNICEF Research

³ See Children Participating in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

Work Assignment Overview			
Tasks/Milestone:	Deliverables/Outputs:	Timeline	Estimate Budget
Inception Phase - Desk researching and secondary review of data; - Assist the team to develop the Study Protocol, with basic literature review, detailed methodology, instruments, sampling and recruitment of participants, fieldwork approach and quality control mechanism for on-line survey and qualitative interviews; - Adjustments of the methodology as per guidance and comments from UNICEF.	Study Protocol for the inception phase and fieldwork plan in English with detailed implementation plan and methodology including but not limited to: (i) list of assessment programmes to be analysed; (ii) mapping of stakeholders and documents; (iii) implementation plan, (iv) charter of risks and mitigation strategies; (v) list of contextualized Analysis of national learning assessment systems (ANLAS)-based dimension descriptions, etc.	End of May, 2021	
Fieldwork Phase - Ensure pretesting and finalization of the instruments based on the methodology developed by the study team; - support in comprehensive literature review; - Cleaning and assistance in comprehensive analysis of the quantitative data provided by the NCET; - Collecting qualitative data through remote KEI/KIIs and FGs and elaboration of transcripts; - Data cleaning and support in initial processing; - Submission of data collection report covering the following pieces: documentation of fieldwork implementation, quality control, final instruments, and datasets. - Debriefing meeting for UNICEF Armenia on the preliminary findings, testing elements of conclusions.	Comprehensive literature review in Armenian and English (no more than 20 pages) Brief report and validation workshop on desk review and secondary data Documentation of fieldwork implementation, including the datasets and full transcripts/audio-files of KEI/KIIs and FGs	End of August, 2021	
Analysis and Reporting - Data further processing and analytics;	Draft reports in English and Armenian	Mid-November, 2021	

<p>- Support in development of the draft report for UNICEF Armenia review providing data visualization. The contents of the report should be developed based on feedback provided after testing and analysis phase of the assignment.</p> <p>- Support in development of the final report.</p>	<p>Final reports in English and Armenian with recommendations (up to 50 pages, excluding annexes) and an Executive Summary</p>	<p>Early December, 2021</p>	
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Minimum Qualifications required:

Bachelors Masters PhD Other

Enter Disciplines

Advanced university degree and/or academic background in Education, Sociology, Economics, Public Policy, Social Policy or a related field.

Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required:

Qualifications or specialized knowledge/experience required:

- At least 2 years of documented experience in education (preferably at least 1 year in either research or development of large-scale assessments); with solid knowledge of international research practice in the field of national learning assessment systems; as well as of Armenia’s national learning assessment system (large-scale assessments, examinations, classroom assessments);
- Experience in research projects, studies, evaluations and household surveys, data collection and analysis and report writing (both in Armenian and in English; links to published research and analytical documents relevant to the TOR to be provided).
- Experience in FG assistance or moderation and qualitative interviewing, including interviewing children;
- Proven ability of working in international and multicultural environments, as well as with children and adolescents.
- Fluency in written and spoken English.
- Previous experience in working with UN agencies will be an asset.

Terms of the application:

The deadline for the submission of applications is **April 25**. Applications should include:

- Cover letter;
- CV;
- Financial Proposal;
- Published research and analytical documents relevant to the TOR;
- Examples of published work (paper, abstract, proceedings) in top international conferences and SCOPUS-indexed high-quality journals will be an asset.

All qualified applicants should apply online, using the UNICEF E-Recruitment system and following online application link found at:

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures, and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be

governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.