**UNICEF Moldova**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Individual Consultancy to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Education and Research in carrying out social policy reforms**

*(both national and international candidates are eligible to apply)*

**Location:** Remote, with possible missions to Chisinau and local districts

**Duration and timeline: 105 days** (within a 7-month period, from December 2023 to June 2024)

1. **Background**

Moldova has made significant progress in reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth since the early 2000s. Policy reforms have deepened the path toward European integration, but many reforms have yet to be further developed and implemented to support Moldova's accession to the European Union and to mitigate the negative impacts of the current socioeconomic crisis. The recent crisis intensified with increasing energy price hikes and inflation, which accelerated to an all-time high of 27% last year. All this contributes to reversing the progress made so far in the fight against high poverty levels within the Moldovan population, social exclusion and limited access to essential services. The Government has been playing a leading role in ensuring an adequate response to the ongoing crisis. In the current context, social assistance and education sectors are the essential areas of state intervention to mitigate the various adverse effects, tackle social exclusion, improve access to services and ensure financial sustainability.

The Government launched transformative reforms of its Social Protection and Education systems to enhance governance, quality and access. Within this, the Government intends to improve access to social protection and education services and strengthen financial sustainability. Both interventions aim to strengthen the local line offices and ensure better coordination between the central and local levels. It is essential to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and the Ministry of Education and Research (MER).

1. **Purpose of the Consultancy**

The consultant hired under this contract will work closely with the government team from both Ministries under the leadership of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection and the Minister of Education and Research. The consultant will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to implement the second phase of the RESTART reform and to the Ministry of Education and Research to increase access to and enrollment in pre-school education, specifically among the most vulnerable children, such as Roma, children with disabilities, children from rural areas and poor families and improve the financial sustainability of preschool education. The consultant is expected to be regularly in touch with the mentioned team. The consultant will provide technical support and ensure that the RESTART and Education sector reforms are aligned with best international practices, national priorities, UN standards and policies so that no one is left behind.

1. **Objectives of the Consultancy**

The primary objectives of the consultancy are as follows:

**For the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection:**

* Support data collection and analysis on the EU Social Rights. The consultant will contribute to a brief analysis to i) generate evidence on gaps between national policies and practices and the European Pillar of Social Rights and ii) transfer/apply findings to the ongoing social assistance reform.
* Support the social assistance reform conducted by the MLSP, including the drafting development plans for social services, budget planning, analysis of data, developing concept notes MIS of social sector and reporting.

**For the Ministry of Education and Research:**

* Revise the existing seven funding schemes for preschools, which aim to assist the MER in updating the funding schemes and funding allocation framework for preschools covering children 3-6/7 years of age. The task is to conduct a thorough analysis of the preschool education network financing and elaborate a financing formula that considers the number of children per institution, including considering various vulnerabilities of children, such as children with disabilities. The previous financing models were developed based on simulations using actual financial information for all kindergartens in the country for the fiscal year 2017, which needs to be updated based on the latest available data.
* Support the development of the plan on restructuring the school network and concept for regionalizing the 'Rayon' (local districts) education departments. Currently, the education departments at the rayon level are managed by the Rayon Councils. These administrative bodies implement the state policy in education and administer the resources allocated from the state budget to the school network. The Ministry of Education and Research aims to regionalize the education departments to gain efficiency and improve resource allocation. The concept document should contribute to greater autonomy in the decision-making processes of schools and territorial education, developing training programs for the administrative staff. This shall also facilitate collaboration between schools and communities and contribute to a robust monitoring and evaluation system.

1. **Details of how the work should be delivered**

The technical assistance will be provided based on the need to advise and support MLSP and MER in implementing respective reforms in each sector. The support provided by the consultant, will be carried out in cooperation with the government technical staff, UNICEF staff and consultants and other UN agencies.

1. **Deliverables and delivery dates**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Relevant Partner** | **Tasks** | **Deliverables** | **Workdays** | **Tentative timeframe\*** |
| MLSP | * Support the international consultant on data collection and analysis on Social Rights Pillar (Joint work with other consultants (including International). Provide technical advice on financial issues of social protection and contribute to budget planning for the next year | Joint draft policy brief on EU social rights pillar | 10 | By 20 December 2023 |
| MER | * Revision of all formulas for preschool education, and in consultation with UNICEF and MER, selection of at least two most relevant and applicable to pe piloted | Propose at least two formulas for funding pre-school education | 20 | By 15 January 2024 |
| MLSP | * Contribute to Gap Analysis of social services and analyse findings of the analysis and develop policy recommendations | Analysis of the Gap Analysis findings and recommendations | 10 | By 30 January 2024 |
| MLSP | * Support for the preparation of development plans for social services | Plan for development of social services | 10 | By 15 February 2024 |
| MLSP | * Support for the preparation of the MMPS annual report, including on RESTART reform | Annual report, including on RESTART reform | 10 | 29 February 2024 |
| MLSP | * Development of the concept/ToR of an automated information system for social services and support in setting up the public IT institution under the MMPS | Concept of the automated information system for social protection services | 10 | 29 March 2024 |
| MER | * Development of a Concept Document for restructuring the school network | Concept Document for restructuring the school network | 15 | 29 April 2024 |
| MER | * Development of an Action Plan for regionalizing the rayon education departments | Action Plan for regionalizing the rayon education departments | 20 | 30 May 2024 |

*\* Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.*

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the individual consultant, under the guidance of UNICEF and MLSP and MER, will:

* Review and adjust as necessary the legal documents and work plan for the assignment, including the data collection, as per UNICEF, MLSP and MER recommendations.
* Conduct briefing and de-briefing meetings with UNICEF, including UNICEF consultants, the MLSP and MER, as well as other partners as required;
* Review and adjust if necessary, deliverables.

1. **Reporting requirements**

The consultant will report to the UNICEF Social Policy Specialist, who will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support so to achieve objectives of the consultancy, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to consultant’s performance and quality of work. Also, the consultant will work closely with UNICEF Early Childhood Development Officer (for Education reform), UNICEF Programme Officer (for RESTART reform) and UNICEF consultants (for EU Social Rights Pillar).

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the consultant shall be discussed and planned in consultation with UNICEF, MLSP and MER. The consultant is expected to deliver each component of the deliverables electronically (in Word format) and in Romanian, and in English as per request. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Social Policy Specialist, Early Childhood Development Officer, Education Specialist), Programme Officer, and Deputy Representative in copy.

1. **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.

1. **Qualifications and experience**

Technical background and experience required:

* Advanced university degree (Masters or PhD) in law, social sciences, public policy or international development policy.
* A minimum of seven years of professional experience in social research, social policy or technical assistance related to public policy, Public Financial Management, budget analysis, fiscal reforms
* Experience in qualitative and quantitative analysis;
* Strong knowledge of current policy debates on Social Reforms carried out in Moldova;
* Demonstrated ability to produce clear, concise policy documents;
* Previous experience in social policy is an asset;
* Demonstrated working experience with government officials, local authorities, and UN agencies;
* Excellent written and oral communication skills in Romanian and a working knowledge of English are required. Knowledge of Russian would be an advantage.

1. **Content of technical proposal**

* Relevant experience with similar type of assignments;
* Proposed approach and methodology (max 1500 words), including:
  + Timeline and milestones
  + Risk and mitigation measures
  + Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them

In addition, please provide your Curriculum Vitae.

1. **Content of financial proposal**

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify the consultancy fee, per day of work, requested for the tasks described in the Terms of Reference in USD. In case a Moldova national will be selected, MDL will serve as the currency of contract and the fee will be converted to the UN Rate of Exchange at the date of contract signature.

Other expenses directly related to the ToR assignments and deliverables such as: (translation/interpretation costs, local transportation etc.) may be included in the financial offer unless specified that UNICEF will cover them separately (see paragraph 14 and 15 below).

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 off-hours, 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.

1. **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 if necessary, may 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 Points (x) = (lowest offer/ 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.

1. **Payment schedule**

The payment will be linked to the following deliverables upon satisfactory completion and acceptance by UNICEF:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Deliverable (delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)** | **Proportion of payment** |
| Joint draft policy brief on EU social rights pillar  Revise the funding formula/s for preschools through update of financial figures and simulation models  Analysis/interpretation of the Gap Analysis findings | 40% |
| Plan for the development of social services  Annual report, including on RESTART reform  Concept of the automated information system for social protection services | 30% |
| Concept Document for restructuring the school network  Action Plan for regionalizing the rayon education departments | 30% |

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.

1. **Definition of supervisory arrangements**

The consultant will work under the oversight of UNICEF Social Policy Specialist Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of each task, as per the schedule outlined above.

1. **Work location and official travel involved**

The work may require local travels to conduct in-person visits and interviews with the different government officials. The consultant is expected to cover costs, arrange and schedule such visits, including transportation. The UNICEF office will facilitate introductions to key informants.

1. **Support provided by UNICEF**

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support so to achieve objectives of the work, 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, and an initial list of relevant experts and counterparts to work with. 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:

**Direct contact role** YES ☐ NO ☒

If yes, please indicate the number of hours/months of direct interpersonal contact with children, or work in their immediately physical proximity, with limited supervision by a more senior member of personnel:

**Child data role** YES ☐ NO ☒

If yes, please indicate the number of hours/months of manipulating or transmitting personal-identifiable information of children (name, national ID, location data, photos):

More information is available in the Child Safeguarding SharePoint and Child Safeguarding FAQs and Updates

**17. Ethical considerations**

The Contractor will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines1. The Consultant should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Consultant should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Assessment, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The Consultant can use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

As per the internal PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS, together with the Notification letter, the selected candidate will be sent the link on 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.