

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Vientiane, Lao PDR

Individual International Consultancy: Development of an ICT in Education Strategy for Lao PDR

Terms of Reference

1. Background:

In a digital maturity assessment (DMA) recently conducted by UNDP and the Lao Ministry of Technology and Communications, Laos is classified under the 'digitally nascent' stage with a score of 1.7 out of 5. In 2020, only 43 percent of the Lao population had access to the internet and there were 61 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people in the country.¹ However, the country is making progress towards becoming 'digitally emerging,' across initiatives to build a digital workforce, develop digital infrastructure and better define focus areas for digital growth. For example, in 2021, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) collaborated with UNICEF and other partners to launch Khang Panya Lao, a digital teaching and learning platform that enables continuity of learning during school closures and supplements face-to-face lessons.²

The DMA highlighted that the "majority of the ministries have a clear vision in place for digital transformation which aligns with the national priorities." For the MoES, ICT in Education is a priority, making an ICT in Education strategy a critical next step to foster the expansion of digital education. The strategy will define a clear vision for ICT in Education for students, teachers, parents and caregivers, education administrators and government officials, and may encompass sections outlining ICT in Education priority areas, next steps for implementation of the strategy and monitoring and evaluation. The strategy will be based on findings from existing, recent assessments of digital maturity and ICT infrastructure, in addition to situational analyses that will be conducted to capture the current state of ICT in Education in Laos.

An ICT in Education technical advisor is needed to support the MoES to develop a five-year ICT in Education strategy that is vision-driven, comprehensive, feasible and evidence-based. The strategy, which will be sector-wide, will build upon a draft version from 2016, updating it in light of Covid-19 educational adaptations and digital learning initiatives in Laos.

2. Purpose:

The purpose of this consultancy is to support the MoES to develop an ICT in Education strategy that will promote digital, child-centred learning and help transform the education system with a focus on equity, inclusivity, and resiliency.

To achieve this purpose, the **specific objectives** are:

1. To develop an inception report describing the overall approach to developing an ICT in Education Strategy
2. To conduct a situation analysis including report on existing initiatives, opportunities, challenges and recommendations for the development of the ICT in Education Strategy
3. Based on consultation and workshops, development of a draft ICT in Education Strategy
4. Based on further review, development of a final version of the ICT in Education Strategy

¹ Runde et al., [Digitalizing Laos](#), 2022

² UNICEF, [The Ministry of Education and Sports Officially Launches a National Digital Teaching and Learning Platform to Support Children's Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), 2021

These objectives are discussed in further detail in the below section on the work assignment. Throughout, the consultant will be working closely with the MoES technical supervisory committee led by the MoES ICT Centre.

3. Work Assignments:

The scope of assignments are as follows:

Stage 1: Kick-off meeting and inception report

- The consultant will hold a kick-off meeting with MoES and UNICEF to align expectations and discuss the overall approach. The consultant can then use the discussion from the kick-off meeting to inform the inception report.
- To further inform the inception report, they should review the National Digital Economy Masterplan, the 2016 ICT in Education Strategy (draft) and other relevant legislative and policy documents.
- The inception report should describe the consultant's overall approach to the development of an ICT in Education strategy in Laos. The report will describe the methodology for each task, the data that will be used, a list of suggested stakeholders to be consulted and documents to be reviewed, and a detailed work plan guided by a clearly defined timeline.

The report should be no more than 10 pages, excluding any annexes. The report will be shared with and reviewed by the MoES supervisory committee and UNICEF.

Stage 2: Situational analysis on ICT in Education in Laos

- The consultant will interview and collect data from stakeholders in the MoES, Ministry of Technology and Communications, development partners and other relevant organizations to understand the current state of ICT in Education in Laos. They should also take stock of the UNDP Digital Maturity Assessment, a UNICEF-supported ICT Infrastructure and HR Assessment of the education sector and other relevant reports / research to inform the situation analysis and ensure this analysis is not duplicative of existing efforts.
- The consultant will additionally conduct interviews with teachers, parents / caregivers and students.
- A situation analysis report summarizing key findings across existing ICT in Education initiatives (platforms, resources, policies) and highlighting opportunities, challenges and recommendations should be prepared and presented to UNICEF and the MoES supervisory committee. The report should be no more than 20 pages, excluding annexes.

Stage 3: Organize workshop

- The consultant will work closely with MoES and UNICEF to organize a workshop with the MoES supervisory committee and other key actors at the national and sub-national levels (e.g., teacher training institutes, Ministry of Technology and Communications, private sector representatives). The workshop will serve as a forum to gather inputs on various sections of the ICT in Education strategy (e.g., vision, priority areas).
- Prior to the workshop, the consultant should prepare a set of slides covering the workshop agenda and a high-level outline for the ICT in Education strategy. These slides will guide the workshop discussion and should be shared with and reviewed by UNICEF. Incorporating interactive elements (e.g. discussion prompts, polls, or real time surveys) in the slides is strongly recommended.

Stage 4: Prepare first draft of the strategy

- Using inputs from the situational analysis and workshop, the consultant will prepare a revised version of the 2016 ICT in Education Strategy. The revised draft may include the following components: vision, skills and competencies, ICT infrastructure, learning resources, teachers,

EMIS and data, community engagement and partnerships, costs and financing and an implementation plan.

- The strategy should be presented to the MoES supervisory committee and UNICEF. The feedback collected during this presentation should be incorporated into the penultimate version of the strategy.

Stage 5: Prepare final version of the strategy

- A further round of review should be conducted for the penultimate draft which may include both central and sub-national level involvement
- Additional feedback should be used to produce the final ICT in Education strategy for MoES official endorsement

4. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required:

Qualifications and Experience

- Advanced university degree in education, public policy or other ICT in Education related areas
- At least 10 years of professional experience working with government institutions in Laos or the East Asia region in advisory, policy or research type roles. In particular, experience with the development of ICT strategies and / or education sector plans is preferred
- Experience with data collection and analysis (such as conducting key informant interviews), workshop facilitation and stakeholder consultation

Knowledge and Skills

- Demonstrated knowledge of ICT in Education, digital literacy, digital learning platforms, etc.
- Excellent management and interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate effectively and diplomatically with government officials
- Ability to work independently in a fast-paced and multicultural environment

Languages

- Spoken, written, and reading fluency in English. Lao language skills would be an asset.

5. Location:

The consultant would need to be based in Vientiane, Lao PDR for the duration of the consultancy. The consultant may be required to join meetings with key Ministries including the Ministry of Education and Sports, UNICEF and with development partners. Some remote working during the consultancy period may be possible based on discussion with UNICEF.

6. Duration:

The Consultant will be contracted for a period of 65 working days, from February to June 2023.

7. Deliverables:

Deliverable	Reporting requirements	Estimated number of working days	Expected time frame for completion
1. Inception report (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inception report with sections on the methodology for each task, the data that will be used, a list of suggested stakeholders to be consulted and documents to be reviewed and a detailed work plan with a timeline. 	5	2 weeks after the contract starts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maximum length: 10 pages excluding annexes ● Annexes to be included as needed 		
2. Situational analysis (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A situational analysis report of ICT in Education in Laos that incorporates findings from stakeholder interviews and document review on existing ICT in Education initiatives and highlights opportunities, challenges and recommendations. ● Maximum length: 20 pages excluding annexes. 	15	By mid-March 2023
3. Workshop materials (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A set of slides to be used for workshop facilitation. The slides should cover the workshop agenda and a high-level outline for the ICT in Education strategy ● The slides should incorporate interactive elements (e.g., polls, breakout groups) where possible 	10	By late March 2023
4. First draft of ICT in Education strategy (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First draft of the ICT in Education strategy 	15	By late April 2023
5. Penultimate draft (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Penultimate draft of the ICT in Education strategy 	10	By mid May 2023
6. Final ICT in Education strategy (in English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final version of the ICT in Education strategy 	10	By end May 2023
Total number of working days		65	

8. Reporting Requirements:

All reporting submissions should be made using Microsoft word and presentations provided using Microsoft PowerPoint or other agreed presentation software.

9. Payment Schedule linked to deliverables:

Payment will be made in accordance with UNICEF financial rules and regulations and based on the deliverables below:

The payment schedule will be as follows:

- 35% payment upon satisfactory completion of deliverables 1 & 2 as approved by UNICEF
- 30% payment upon satisfactory completion of deliverable 3 & 4 as approved by UNICEF
- 35% payment upon satisfactory completion of deliverable 5 & 6 as approved by UNICEF

Any in-country travel costs will be paid upon completion of travel and based on actuals (using UN standard DSA and travel rates at the time of travel). Aside from in-country travel, no additional fees shall be paid outside of the consultancy contract. Payment should be directly linked with satisfactory deliverables at specific time intervals and as certified by the contract supervisor.

** The fees shall be calculated based on the days estimated to complete the assignment in the Terms of Reference and shall be considered the maximum compensation as part of a lump sum contract and agreed on a work plan for submission of deliverables. Payment will be made upon delivery of all final products and full and satisfactory completion of the assignment.*

10. Administrative Issues:

The consultant is expected to use their own IT equipment including their own laptop computer. Field visits may be required and transportation will be provided by UNICEF. Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) for field trips will be paid according to UNICEF guidelines and calculated based on UN rate at the time of travel. Translations during meetings and translation of deliverables from English to Lao language will be provided by UNICEF.

The consultant is required to obtain his/her own health insurance including medical evacuation for the whole duration of the assignment.

Copyright of all the deliverables to be produced through this assignment will rest with the MoES and UNICEF.

11. Contract supervisor:

The consultant will be supervised by the UNICEF Lao PDR Education Manager, under the overall leadership of the UNICEF Chief of Education. Reporting requirements are as per the deliverables and timeframes mentioned above with acceptable quality in a timely manner (monthly report).

12. Nature of 'Penalty Clause' to be Stipulated in Contract:

Unsatisfactory performance: In case of unsatisfactory performance, the contract will be terminated by notification letter sent five (5) business days prior to the termination date in the case of contracts for a total period of less than two (2) months, and ten (10) business days prior to the termination date in the case of contracts for a longer period

Performance indicators: Consultants' performance will be evaluated against the following criteria: timeliness, quality, and relevance/feasibility of recommendations and support provided to UNICEF Lao PDR.

13. Submission of applications:

Interested candidates are kindly requested to apply and upload the following documents to:
<http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/>

- Letter of Interest (cover letter)
- CV or Resume
- Performance evaluation reports or references of similar consultancy assignments (if available)
- Financial proposal: All-inclusive lump-sum cost including breakdown by consultancy fee, international travel costs (if travelling to Lao PDR) and medical insurance covering medical evacuation for the whole duration of the assignment. Proposal should not include any in-country travel which will be paid by UNICEF in line UNICEF guidelines and calculated based on the UN rate at the time of travel.

14. Assessment Criteria:

As part of the evaluation and selection, a Cumulative Analysis Method (weight combined score method) shall be used for this recruitment. This involves a technical evaluation and an assessment of the financial proposal:

a) Technical evaluation of the candidates' qualifications, experience and expertise (max. 100 points) weight 70%:

Qualifications (20 points)

- Advanced university degree in education, public policy or other ICT in Education related areas (20 points)

Experience and expertise (80 points)

- At least 10 years of professional work experience with government institutions in Laos or the East Asia region in advisory, policy or research type roles. In particular, experience with the development of ICT strategies and/or education sector plans is preferred. (30 points)
- Experience with data collection and analysis (such as conducting key informant interviews), workshop facilitation and stakeholder consultation (20 points)
- Previous working experience in ASEAN countries is desirable. Experience on ICT in education projects in Lao PDR is a clear advantage (20 points).
- Excellent inter-personal and communication skills in English language (10 points).

b) Financial Proposal (max. 100 points) weight 30%

The maximum number of points shall be allotted to the lowest Financial Proposal that is opened /evaluated and compared among those technical qualified candidates who have attained a minimum 60 points score in the technical evaluation. Other Financial Proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price. The Contract shall be awarded to candidate obtaining the highest combined technical and financial scores, subject to the satisfactory result of the verification interview.

For the technical assessment, candidates will have to be awarded at least 60 points out 100 to be considered for the assignment.

The Contract shall be awarded to candidate obtaining the highest combined technical and financial scores, **subject to the satisfactory result of the verification interview.**

15. Programme Area, Outputs and Specific Key Results Areas in the Rolling Work Plan:

Section Request: Education Programme Section

Programme Area: Education

Section Request: Education

Programme Areas:

Output 1, Activity 6: *Support the development and endorsement of digital learning policy, guidelines and standards*