**UNICEF Moldova**

**Terms of Reference**

**Individual consultancy for carrying out a national mapping of the general education institutions and establishing priority response criteria for the equipment**

**Location:** Home-based

**Duration and timeline:** **20 working days** (within August – October 2023 period)

1. **Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine 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. Many children, especially children with disabilities did not have access to ICT and Assistive Technologies (AT) 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.

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), developed a new long-term “Education 2030” Development Strategy. 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 is solely used for digital transformation of the education sector. Based on a competitive process and its valuable experience and expertise in education globally and nationally, UNICEF was identified as Grant Agent (GA) for the Multiplier Fund.

The Multiplier Grant 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. Improved access to appropriate ICT has a direct impact on the well-being of children and life-long participation and inclusion into the education process, as well as social and economic life. Most importantly, providing access to ICT at an early age is essential for children’s inclusion in the education system and their education achievements, which determine the quality of their adult life. The ICT devices are crucial for the inclusion of children, including children with special educational needs (SEN) in education to ensure the establishment of all intervention measures and support services for educational inclusion.

The education ICT and strategic framework within the Multiplier will allow for a prioritized approach to providing ICT resources from the programme to all children, including the most disadvantaged. One of the objectives of the Multiplier Programme is to carry out a national (deficit) mapping of educational institutions vis a vis the national standards, the portal to maintain this and establish priority response criteria for the equipment of educational institutions.

To achieve this purpose, an analysis of the ICT needs of the general education institutions will be undertaken. The assessment is a strategic activity and part of the planning process that aims to identify the current situation and considers the existing facilities and infrastructures to identify the demand and supply. The assessment will also provide MER and UNICEF with the information necessary for the prioritization and selection of appropriate devices at national, regional, or institutional level for the equipment of these institutions.

1. **Purpose of the assignment**

The purpose of this consultancy is to carry out a national (deficit) mapping of educational institutions, develop recommendations for the improvement of data collection of ICT equipment in EMIS and establish priority response criteria for the equipment for each level of education and type of unit.

The analysis at the national level will determine the existent needs in terms of ICT, including the needs already met, as well as the provision and maintenance of ICT. This will help better understand the extent to which the education system is serving the needs of all children and will further inform MER and UNICEF on the development of a prioritized approach for ICT provision. Also, the consultant will elaborate program’s targeting and selection criteria for the equipment of educational institutions.

1. **Objectives of the consultancy**

* Carry out in-depth analysis and assessment of the existing ICT of the general education institutions and develop recommendations for the improvement of data collection of ICT equipment
* Provide a general overview and a detailed report on the identified ICT needs
* Establish priority response criteria for the equipment of educational institutions correlated with national equipment standards for each level of education and type of unit.

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

MER will provide the consultant detailed information following a baseline study on the available ICT of the general education institutions from EMIS. The data from EMIS will include information on the existing ICT in schools, availability of supporting infrastructure (rooms, internet connection) and availability of trained or trainable personnel at schools.Additional information can be requested from MER responsible staff if needed.

Accordingly, the consultant will pull information from the provided sources to assess the extent to which the educational institutions are equipped with ICT as to increase effectiveness, inclusion, and resilience of the system.

A mixed-methods approach will be necessary: a desk-review of existing materials provided by MER on the current situation of the ICT equipment; and/or focus group discussions with MER relevant staff and/or other stakeholders or focus group discussions with the staff of up to 10 schools. The consultant will need to use qualitative data collection techniques and analyse administrative data to develop a report on the current system capacity, availability and accessibility of ICT, level of equipment, and develop recommendations for the improvement of data collection of ICT equipment in EMIS.

Also, the consultant will develop priority response criteria for the equipment of educational institutions according to national education digital standards for each level of education and type of unit. The established criteria will help the MER and UNICEF provide education institutions with appropriate equipment based on the identified priorities.

1. **Deliverables and delivery dates**

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| **Tasks** | **Deliverable** | **Timeline\*** |
| 1**.**   * Induction meeting with MER and UNICEF * Conduct a desk review of documentation provided by the MER * Apply analytical methodology and tools to assess data; develop recommendations | * Mapping and assessment conducted * Report on the identified ICT needs * and gaps provided, including tools used and collected data * Recommendations for the improvement of data collection of ICT equipment in EMIS | 15 working days |
| 2. Establish priority response criteria for the equipment of educational institutions | Criteria identified and consulted with MER and UNICEF | 5 working days |
| **Total:** | | 20 working days |

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

1. **Reporting requirements**

The consultant will report to the UNICEF project Officer with the Education Officer and Education Specialist in copy, 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.

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the consultant shall be discussed and planned in consultation with UNICEF. The consultant is expected to deliver each component of the workplan electronically (in Word/Excel format) in English. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Project Officer by email, with the Education Officer 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 professional and ethical standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF and counterparts

1. **Qualifications and experience**

* University degree in ICT, education, social protection, economics, or other relevant studies
* Minimum 5 years of working experience in the relevant field
* Proven experience in collecting and analysing data, development of the technical specifications
* Experience in conducting desk reviews and research, including qualitative studies and baseline assessments, evaluations will be an asset
* Demonstrated work experience in the education sector with national/international institutions/organizations is a strong asset
* Excellent verbal and written communications skills, both at technical level and policy level
* Fluency in Romanian and working knowledge in English is required. Knowledge of another official UN language or a local language is an asset.

1. **Content of technical proposal**

* Relevant experience with similar type of assignments (max 300 words)
* Proposed approach and methodology (max 1500 words), including:
* Timeline and milestones
* Risk and mitigation measures
* Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them
* Sample questionnaire: 2-3 interview questions per type of stakeholder
* Annex: Short Sample or links to related work previously conducted by the consultant

In addition, please provide your *Curriculum Vitae*.

1. **Content of financial proposal**

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify an all-inclusive fee to complete the tasks/deliverables described in the Terms of Reference in MDL.

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.

In case when a Moldovan resident is selected for contracting, MDL will serve as contract currency, converted at the UN exchange rate applicable at contract signature date.

**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.

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| *Technical evaluation criteria for selection* | *Evaluation Scale Points* |
| * 1. Academic degree in ICT, education, social protection, economics, or other relevant studies | **10** |
| * 1. Minimum 5 years of working experience in the relevant field | **15** |
| * 1. Proven experience in collecting and analysing data, development of the technical specifications | **15** |
| * 1. Experience in conducting desk reviews and research, including qualitative studies and baseline assessments, evaluations will be an asset | **15** |
| * 1. Demonstrated work experience in the education sector with national/international institutions/organizations is a strong asset | **5** |
| * 1. Excellent verbal and written communications skills, both at technical level and policy level. | **5** |
| * 1. Fluency in Romanian and working knowledge in English is required. Knowledge of another official UN language or a local language is an asset. | **5** |
| **Total score (minimum 50 points required for technical qualification)** | **70** |

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. **Estimated cost of contract**

1. **Payment schedule**

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

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| **Deliverable** **(Delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)** | **Proportion of payment** |
| Deliverable 1 | 50% |
| Deliverable 2 | 50% |

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 specialist will work under the oversight of Project Officer of UNICEF 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 will require local travels in order to conduct in-person visits and interviews with the different government authorities, as per their availability. 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 specialist 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.

1. **Child Safeguarding**

Is this project/assignment considered as “[Elevated Risk Role](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-ChildSafeguarding/DocumentLibrary1/Guidance%20on%20Identifying%20Elevated%20Risk%20Roles_finalversion.pdf?CT=1590792470221&OR=ItemsView)” 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](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-ChildSafeguarding/SitePages/Amendments-to-the-Recruitment-Guidance.aspx) and [Child Safeguarding FAQs and Updates](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-ChildSafeguarding/DocumentLibrary1/Child%20Safeguarding%20FAQs%20and%20Updates%20Dec%202020.pdf)

1. **Ethical considerations**

The Contractor will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines1. 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](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/portals/RF/Regulatory%20Framework%20Library/DHR%20Procedure%20on%20Consultants%20-%20DHR_PROCEDURE_2018_005.pdf), together with the Notification letter, the contractor will be sent the [link on UNICEF’s learning platform, Agora](https://agora.unicef.org/course/view.php?id=15620), 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.

1. **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 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.