

Terms of Reference

International Consultancy: Support the Education Quality Assurance Department in implementation of the Grade 8 National Assessment

Contract modality: Consultant contract or Individual Contractor

Section: Education

Duty station: [Phnom Penh, Cambodia] , home-based , or hybrid

Duration: 19 September 2022 and 31st May 2023

1. Background

Cambodia's National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019-2023 highlights the development of high-quality and capable human resources as key to supporting economic growth and competitiveness in the country. Education development is critical for Cambodia's transition from a lower-middle income country to an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2050. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) for the period 2019-2023 is designed as a further step in putting in place the necessary human resources and infrastructure to help achieve the national vision and goals.

The Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF) is a long-running partnership between the Royal Government of Cambodia, the European Union, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and UNICEF. The purpose of the CDPF is to support the realization of policy priorities identified in the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport's ESP, including through evidence- and data-based decision making and policy development.

A standardized student assessment is an integral part of evaluating the education system of a country. In Cambodia, the standardized student assessment, though still a new concept, plays a vital role in informing key policies and practices in the midst of resource and human capital constraints. The Education Quality Assurance Department (EQAD) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) is the key body in charge of the implementation of the current national assessment of grades 3, 6, 8, and 11 which was initiated in 2007. The evidence from the national assessment is meant to provide systematic support for the end users in the system.

Cambodia has had recent successes in increasing student enrolment, and almost every child can attend school in primary education. Existing evidence from learning assessments including the Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA-D) in 2018 and the South East Asia Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) in 2019 indicates, however, that Cambodia is facing a significant learning challenge with a great majority of students failing to achieve minimum learning standards in both literacy and numeracy. According to the PISA-D results, only 8% of 15-year-olds in Cambodia reach a minimum proficiency level in reading and 10% reach the minimum level in mathematics. The SEA-PLM results also indicate that only 11% and 19% of grade 5 students attain minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics respectively.

The learning crisis has been amplified by COVID-19. The closure of schools has had significant effects on students' learning, particularly among the most disadvantaged students, and is threatening to further extend its effects and challenge decades of progress that has been made, both in Cambodia and internationally. The National Learning Assessment for Grade 6 conducted by EQAD in 2021, with financial and technical support from the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF), identified significant learning loss among Grade 6 students. Compared to the last equivalent Learning Assessment in 2016, the

percentage of students who failed to demonstrate basic proficiency increased from 34% to 45% in the Khmer language and from 49% to 74% in Mathematics.

The national standardized student assessments take place on a rolling basis, with each grade intended to be assessed every fourth year. The latest grade 8 national assessment was conducted in 2017 with a nationally representative sample of 6,608 students from 230 schools, measuring student performance and progress in Khmer (reading and writing), mathematics, and physics.

The proposed consultancy on the Grade 8 National Learning Assessment will provide an important benchmark for the learning level of grade 8 students, complement the Joint Education Sector Needs assessment and inform the direction and strategies for effective remedial learning to help students catch up on lost learning. It will further expand the evidence base on how school closures and distance learning have affected learning amongst students in Cambodia

2. Purpose

The overall objective of the consultancy is to assess the current learning levels of grade 8 students in Cambodia. Compared with the 2017 assessment results, the consultancy also aims to analyze to what extent learning performance has changed over the past 5 years. In doing so the study will examine any loss/gains arising from school closures and/or lack of access and/or usage of distance learning modalities. This will be done by providing technical assistance to the Education Quality Assurance Department (EQAD) for the grade 8 national assessment. It will also, to the extent possible, compare and analyze the grade 8 results with the grade 6 national learning assessment and Learning loss report published in 2022

3. Work Assignment

The outputs of the consultancy will be used to increase knowledge of student learning outcomes and student learning loss during and after the COVID19 pandemic. The outputs will be further used to stimulate dialogue among the CDPF partners, the education sector stakeholders, and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports to identify priority areas for interventions going forward. Under the overall supervision of the UNICEF Chief of Education, with inputs from the CDPF partners, and direct technical guidance by a UNICEF Education Specialist in close collaboration with the Education Quality Assurance Department, the consultant will undertake the following tasks:

- Identify and analyze existing data sets that can support additional analysis on student learning loss/gain, such as the previous grade 8 national assessment conducted in 2017, and the grade 6 national assessment incl. learning loss report published in 2022, based on sound methodological considerations.
- Support EQAD team to quality assure data collection tools, sampling methodology, and assessment questionnaires, aiming to address potential biases due to dropout for students.
- Support the EQAD team to carry out analysis to investigate the current learning level and learning loss/gain, identifying potential mitigating and intensifying, factors as a result of school closures, based on appropriate and accepted scientific statistical methodologies, as part of the grade 8 national assessment.
- Write a concise report on the results of the grade 8 national assessment including the current student learning levels as well as learning loss/gain caused due to school closures and other factors associated with learning and the COVID19 pandemic. The consultant will draw on both the findings from the 2022 grade 8 national assessment and the previous 2017 grade 8 national assessment and other existing data sets as appropriate, and as identified by the consultant to enable an analysis of learning loss/gain.

- Provide continuous capacity building and assistance to EQAD technical officers
- Support EQAD to develop a presentation on findings for dissemination to wider education sector stakeholders, CDPF partners, and MoEYS leadership.

4. 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):

5. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required

- An advanced University degree (master's degree or above) in a relevant field such as education planning, management, economics, statistics, or similar
- At least ten years of experience working in the education sector and a solid understanding of the education development context in Cambodia or Southeast Asia
- Strong research and data analysis skills and demonstrated experience in learning assessment projects, learning loss estimations, methods, and analysis.
- Good knowledge of quantitative and qualitative analysis software packages (e.g. Stata, SPSS, R, Nvivo).
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in the English language.
- Demonstrated ability to provide on-the-job capacity-building support to government officials.

6. Location

The Consultant will be required to work remotely during the contract period, no in-country presence is required.

7. Duration

The duration of the assignment will be for forty (40) working days between 3rd October 2022 and 31st May 2023.

8. Deliverables

<i>Deliverables and descriptions</i>	<i>Number of working days</i>	<i>Due date</i>
Deliverable 1: Inception report. The Inception Report will outline key activities, timelines, questionnaires or guiding questions, indicators, methodology for data analysis and data sources, available sources of information, and analysis frames. (approx. 15 pages excl. annexes.)	10	5 weeks after the contract signing
Deliverable 2: Draft report on grade 8 national student assessment including the analysis of current learning level and learning loss/gain compared to the previous assessment. (approx. 25 pages excl. annexes) Drawing upon data from the ongoing grade 6 national assessment, as well as previous assessments and studies as identified by the consultant and a draft presentation of key findings.	20	15 weeks after the contract signing
Deliverable 3: Final report on grade 8 national student assessment including the analysis of current learning level and learning loss/gain compared to the previous assessment, incorporating feedback and suggestions on the draft report from MoEYS and CDPF Partners, and final presentation on findings.	10	20 weeks after contract signing
Total number of days	40	

9. Payment Schedule linked to deliverables

- 20% payment upon satisfactory completion of deliverable 1
- 40% payment upon satisfactory completion of deliverable 2
- 40% payment upon satisfactory completion of deliverable 3

** 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. No additional fees shall be paid to complete the assignment. 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 have their own laptop and necessary work tools.

Consultancy 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. No additional fees shall be paid to complete the assignment. Payment will be made upon delivery of all final products and full and satisfactory completion of the assignment.

Performance indicators: Consultants' performance will be evaluated against the following criteria: timeliness and quality of the deliverables provided to UNICEF Cambodia as outlined above.

No contract may commence unless the contract is signed by both UNICEF and the consultant or contractor.

No contract may commence unless the consultant provides a certificate of completion of mandatory courses on "Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse"; "Ethics & Integrity at UNICEF", "Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority". A certificate certifying completion within the last three months is to be submitted with the signed contract.

Consultant will be required to sign the health statement for consultants / individual contractor prior to taking up the assignment, and to document that they have appropriate health insurance, if applicable.

Consultant will be expected to submit confirmation of the mandatory vaccinations including Covid-19 before commencement of contract.

11. Contract supervisor

The consultant will report to the UNICEF Chief of Education, who will be responsible for the final review of the deliverables and the certification of payments to the Consultant. The UNICEF Education Specialist will provide direct technical guidance and coordination with the Consultant. The Consultant will work closely with the Director of EQAD at MoEYS and other stakeholders.

The Consultant will be contracted under the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF) and will be required to work in such a way to maximize the impact and sustainability of the input by taking an approach that actively supports capacity development and ownership on the part of the lead department. In particular, the technical adviser is required to:

- Work in close communication with the designated MoEYS manager, following the reporting lines
- Take a mentoring approach that supports identified counterparts to progressively take the lead on key tasks
- Work in close communication with other Advisers as well as others appointed under the CDPF and by other complementary programs, to ensure coherence
- Collaborate effectively with other technical departments and relevant development partners

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 for UNICEF Cambodia.

13. Submission of applications

Interested candidates are kindly requested submit the following documents:

- 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:
 - Consultancy daily/monthly fee
 - Medical insurance (health and accidental death, medical evacuation) for the entire duration of the contract.

14. Assessment Criteria

A two-stage procedure shall be utilized in evaluating proposals, with evaluation of the candidates experience being completed prior to any price proposal being compared.

Applications shall therefore contain the following required documentation:

1. Cover letter, and updated CV. No financial information should be contained in the technical proposal.
2. Financial Proposal: Lump-sum offer with the cost breakdown: Consultancy fee, and other administration cost if applicable

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

Qualification (20 points)

Advanced University degree (Masters) in a relevant field such as education planning, management, economics, statistics or similar

Experience (80 points)

- *At least ten years of experience working in the education sector and solid understanding of the education development context in Cambodia or Southeast Asia (30 points)*
- *Strong research and data analysis skills and demonstrated experience in learning assessment projects, methods, and analysis, preferably in Southeast Asia. (25 points)*
- *Good knowledge of quantitative and qualitative analysis software packages (e.g. Stata, SPSS, R, Nvivo). (10 points)*
- *Excellent written and oral communication skills in English language. (5 points)*
- *Demonstrated ability to provide on-the-job capacity building support to government officials. (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 70 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.

