

### TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS

<b>National consultant to conduct a research study on student retention in Cambodia</b>	<b>Funding Code:</b>	<b>Duty Station:</b> Phnom Penh, Cambodia
<b>Purpose of Activity/Assignment:</b>		
<p>The purpose of this consultancy is to support the Department of Policy (DoPo) in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to undertake a research study on the determinants of student retention in upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary in Cambodia, and identify potential policy interventions at school, sub-national and central levels that could support students to remain enrolled.</p>		
<b>Scope of Work:</b>		
<p>The scope of work for this consultancy is to provide technical support to DoPo to conduct a research study on student retention and identify potential policy interventions to support reduced student dropout. The study will cover the following research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the existing patterns of intra- and inter-cycle dropout?</li> <li>2. What are key determinants of dropout (i.e., age, socio-economic status, repetition) in upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education? (Disaggregated by characteristics such as gender, disability status, minority status and others deemed relevant)</li> <li>3. What are the key determinants of inter-cycle (i.e., age, socio-economic status, repetition) dropout between primary and lower secondary education, and lower secondary upper secondary education? (Disaggregated by characteristics such as gender, disability status, minority status and others deemed relevant)</li> <li>4. What are the main motivators for students to dropout of education? How do these differ amongst different population groups? (i.e., male/female, rural/urban, students with disabilities etc.)</li> <li>5. How effective are current policies and strategies aimed at supporting student retention?</li> <li>6. What policy interventions could be applicable to reduce dropout and improve student retention in Cambodia?</li> </ol> <p>The consultant will carry out this research utilizing a mixed methods approach. This will begin with an extensive literature review on educational retention in Cambodia and the region, including existing methodologies and theoretical frameworks (i.e., Seven Dimensions of Exclusion). Furthermore, the literature review will include the collation of existing policies and strategies in Cambodia aimed at addressing student dropout, as well as the identification policies and strategies (including early dropout warning systems) that have been effective in reducing dropout and improving student retention in similar contexts. The consultant will utilize the literature review to support the design of the conceptual framework which we be used to analyse the factors which affect dropout and retention, identify policy options that could be considered for the Cambodian context, and inform the subsequent development of data collection tools.</p> <p>Quantitative data analysis will focus on historical Education Management Information System (EMIS) data and household survey data such as Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) and Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) to identify key patterns in dropout and retention. The consultant will be responsible for conducting a regression analysis to identify the relative association of various individual and household characteristics (i.e., socio-economic status, disability status, gender) with dropout and retention, the development of retention profiles an education pathways analysis. The consultant will also draw on historical data to identify any perceivable effects of historical policy implementation (i.e., scholarships) in dropout and retention rates and may also utilize learning assessment data from PISA 2022 and National Learning Assessments (Grade 3, Grade 6, Grade 8, and Grade 11) to generate retention profiles of students who perform poorly.</p>		

The consultant will further be responsible for conducting primary data collection with teachers, students, parents, community leaders (I.e., village and commune chiefs) and local education authorities including representatives from the PoE and DoE. The consultant will be responsible for developing data collection tools, including surveys and interview guides, for administration with target population groups. Questionnaires, which will be designed according to the results of the literature review and quantitative data analysis, will focus on the “push” factors which drive dropout, the “pull” factors which motivate students to stay enrolled in education, as well as different groups perceptions of current and potential policy options that target improved retention. The consultant will then be responsible for triangulating results to answer the above identified research question, specifically identify the key determinants of student retention according to different population groups and identifying potential mitigation measures.

The consultancy will be Phnom Penh based, with the consultant to expected be in country for the duration of the contract in order to engage closely with the DoPo team and carry out data collection.

The consultant is expected to work closely with the Department of Policy with frequent travel to the provinces (expected number of mission days is 10; missions to more than one province may be combined for efficiency in consultation with DoPo and UNICEF). The Consultant is expected to organize his/her own travel to provinces in close collaboration with relevant MoEYS staff.

**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:

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**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):

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More information is available in the [Child Safeguarding SharePoint](#) and [Child Safeguarding FAQs and Updates](#)

<b>Budget year:</b> 30 Jun 2026	<b>Requesting Section/Issuing Office:</b> Education Section	<b>Reasons why consultancy cannot be done by staff:</b> The assignment requires dedicated time and technical expertise that is not currently available inhouse.
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**Included in Annual/Rolling Workplan:**  Yes  No, please justify:

**Consultant sourcing:**  National  International  Both

<b>Competitive Selection:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertisement <input type="checkbox"/> Roster <input type="checkbox"/> Informal competitive (Low Value Contract)		
<b>Single Source Selection:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> (Emergency - Director's approval)		
<b>If Extension, Justification for extension:</b>		
<b>Supervisor:</b> Education Officer	<b>Start Date:</b> October 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	<b>End Date:</b> July 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2025

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Estimated Number of Days	Delivery deadline	Estimated Budget (Percentage of payment)
<p>1. Develop a conceptual framework and research outline.</p> <p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of existing methodologies and theoretical frameworks for assessing student retention, dropout and transition including UNICEF's "Seven Dimensions of Exclusion."</li> <li>Based on the review, propose, and outline a conceptual framework relevant and adapted to the Cambodian context.</li> <li>Develop a comprehensive research outline based on the proposed conceptual framework including key activities, timelines, proposed data collection tools, proposed sampling strategies, data sources and methodology for data analysis.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable #1:</b> Conceptual framework and research outline (up to 15 pages in English) for the study on determinants of student retention.</p>	5 days	October 18 <sup>th</sup> 2024	7%
<p>2. Conduct a literature review of existing research on the determinants of student retention.</p> <p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of previous research on educational retention, dropout and completion in Cambodia and Southeast Asia.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable #2:</b> Literature review summary (up to 20 pages in English) including key trends and patterns in the determinants of student retention and relevant policy interventions for consideration in data collection.</p>	10 days	November 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	12%

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Estimated Number of Days	Delivery deadline	Estimated Budget (Percentage of payment)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify a list of relevant policy strategies and interventions that have been successful in improving student retention in similar contexts.</li> <li>Through the literature review, identify key themes, patterns, and trends in the determinants of student retention.</li> </ul>				
<p>3. Undertake a quantitative analysis of secondary data.</p> <p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an analysis of secondary data sources including EMIS, CDHS, CSES to identify key patterns in both inter- and intra-cycle dropout and retention in upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, including disaggregation by demographic characteristics such as gender, location disability status and minority status overtime.</li> <li>Conduct a regression analysis using household data to identify the association between key individual and household characteristics (i.e. socio-economic status, disability status and gender) with dropout and retention.</li> <li>Utilize EMIS data to conduct an education pathways analysis and develop retention profiles.</li> <li>Analyse learning assessment data, including PISA 2022 and National Learning Assessments, to examine the relationship between school performance and retention.</li> <li>Examine historical data to analyse the impact of historical policy implementation (i.e., scholarships) on dropout and retention rates.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable #3:</b> Summary of secondary data analysis (up to 20 pages excluding annexes) in English including the evolution of key trends in dropout and retention overtime, the examination of individual and household determinants of dropout and the evaluation of policy reforms.</p>	15 days	December 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	20%
<p>4. Design data collection tools including interview guides and surveys/questionnaires.</p>	<p><b>Deliverable #4:</b></p>	7 days	December 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	10%

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Estimated Number of Days	Delivery deadline	Estimated Budget (Percentage of payment)
<p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the relevant target population according to the conceptual framework, literature review and initial results of the secondary data analysis and develop a sampling frame.</li> <li>Review the sampling frame with DoPo and collaboratively utilize the frame to draw a sample that matches the research design.</li> <li>Based on the literature review, conceptual framework and quantitative data analysis, develop data collection tools for use with identified population groups (I.e. school directors, teachers, students, parents, local education authorities).</li> <li>Ensure data collection tools cover the key determinants of drop-out and retention, relevant socio-demographic characteristics and discussions of potential policy reforms and initiatives.</li> <li>Revise and refine questionnaires with the DoPo team.</li> </ul>	<p>Sampling frame including necessary sample size according to identified population group and data collection tools including questionnaires and interview guides for relevant population groups.</p>			
<p>5. Support the DoPo team to conduct primary data collection with target population groups.</p> <p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide technical guidance and orientation to the DoPo team of researchers on the administration of surveys and interview guides for the different population groups.</li> <li>Support DoPo to undertake data collection in the field (10 days estimated) including conducting interviews and focus groups and administering surveys.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable #5:</b> Data collection report including number of interviews carried out, surveys administered and summary of implementation.</p>	<p>13 days</p>	<p>May 30<sup>th</sup> 2025</p>	<p>17%</p>
<p>6. Produce a draft of the research report.</p>	<p><b>Deliverable #6:</b></p>	<p>10 days</p>	<p>June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025</p>	<p>12%</p>

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Estimated Number of Days	Delivery deadline	Estimated Budget (Percentage of payment)
<p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct necessary data entry and cleaning.</li> <li>• Code data collected from interviews and focus group discussions to identify emerging themes.</li> <li>• Triangulate results emerging from primary data analysis with those from the literature review and secondary data analysis.</li> <li>• Produce a draft research report of the findings on the key determinants of retention and potential successful policy reforms or interventions.</li> <li>• Hold a series of consultative meetings with DoPo and UNICEF to review report findings and gather feedback.</li> </ul>	<p>Research reports drafted including literature review, primary data analysis, secondary data analysis and summary of policy recommendations.</p>			
<p>7. Revise the draft report and produce a final version of the study on student retention.</p> <p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the consultations with DoPo and UNICEF, produce a final version of the research report.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable #7:</b> Final research report on student retention including an analysis of key determinants and potential policy interventions.</p>	<p>10 days</p>	<p>July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025</p>	<p>12%</p>
<p>8. Final consultancy report.</p> <p>The following key tasks are expected to be undertaken during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a final consultancy report summarizing key achievements, challenges and lessons learned.</li> <li>• Deliver a presentation of the key findings of the retention study to UNICEF and a broader audience of MoEYS representatives.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deliverable #8:</b> Final consultancy report (approximately 15 pages excluding annexes).</p>	<p>3 days</p>	<p>July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025</p>	<p>10%</p>
		<p><b>73 days</b></p>		

<p><b>Minimum Qualifications required*:</b></p>	<p><b>Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required*:</b></p>
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advanced university degree (at least Master’s degree or equivalent, or PhD) in a relevant field such as education, international development, statistics, or another relevant field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A minimum of 5 years of professional experience working in educational or social research.</li> <li>Demonstrable experience conducting qualitative educational research including sampling design and developing data collection tools.</li> <li>Relevant experience conducting quantitative education data analysis including generating key indicators and conducting regression analyses.</li> <li>Good knowledge of quantitative and qualitative analysis software packages (i.e., Stata, SPSS, R, Nvivo)</li> <li>Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.</li> <li>Ability to work collaboratively with government counterparts and development partners.</li> <li>Excellent written and oral communication skills in English and Khmer</li> </ul>
<p><b>Submission of applications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter of Interest (cover letter) outlining competencies for the proposed assignment</li> <li>CV or Resume</li> <li>Performance evaluation reports or references of similar consultancy assignments (if available)</li> <li>Writing sample from previous similar research assignment.</li> <li>Financial proposal: All-inclusive lump-sum cost including consultancy fee, travel cost to the provinces for 10 days, accommodation cost, and a health insurance cost for this assignment.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Evaluation Criteria (This will be used for the <u>Selection Report</u> (for clarification see <u>Guidance</u>))</b></p> <p>A) Technical Evaluation (100 points): Weight 70%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advanced university degree (at least Master’s degree or equivalent, or PhD) in a relevant field such as education, international development, statistics, or another relevant field. (15 points)</li> <li>A minimum of 5 years of professional experience working in educational or social research. (20 points)</li> <li>Demonstrable experience conducting qualitative educational research including sampling design and developing data collection tools. (25 points)</li> <li>Relevant experience conducting quantitative education data analysis including generating key indicators and conducting regression analyses. (25 points)</li> <li>Good knowledge of quantitative and qualitative analysis software packages (i.e., Stata, SPSS, R, Nvivo). (15 points)</li> </ul> <p>B) Financial Proposal (100 points): Weight 30%</p> <p>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 65 points score in the technical evaluation. Other Financial Proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price.</p> <p>The Contract shall be awarded to candidate obtaining the highest combined technical and financial scores, subject to the satisfactory result of the verification interview.</p>	

<p><b>Administrative details:</b></p> <p>Visa assistance required: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Home Based <input type="checkbox"/> Office Based:</p>	<p><b>If office based</b>, seating arrangement identified: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>IT and Communication equipment required: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Email/O365 access required: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Internet access required: <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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<sup>1</sup> Costs indicated are estimated. Final rate shall follow the “best value for money” principle, i.e., achieving the desired outcome at the lowest possible fee. Consultants will be asked to stipulate all-inclusive fees, including lump sum travel and subsistence costs, as applicable.

Payment of professional fees will be based on submission of agreed deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

**Text to be added to all TORs:**

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 (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.