# UNICEF Moldova

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Individual Consultancy to design the Funding Formula and transfer mechanisms for inclusion of refugee children in public education of the Republic of Moldova**

(Both national and international may apply)

**Location:** Remote, with possible visit to Chisinau, Moldova

**Duration and timeline:** 30 days (within 3 months period, from June to September 2024)

1. **Background**

According to the Ministry of Research and Education of the Republic of Moldova, in February 2024, only 2,264 children out of an estimated 37,000 school-age refugee children population, were enrolled in schools and preschools. Many children (53.7%) were enrolled in Chisinau and Balti (5,88%) public schools. The same trend is observed in the preschools - 42,24% in Chisinau and 7,59% in Balti.

Most of the children (88,97%) are enrolled in Russian-speaking schools while the remaining 180 children (11.3%) are attending Romanian-speaking schools. Inclusion in equitable quality education in national systems contributes to resilience, prepares children and youth for participation in cohesive societies, and is the best option for refugees and their hosting communities.

#### The main source for financing the public education system at national level are the special destination transfers from the state budget to the local budgets for the institutions of early education (creches), preschool, primary, gymnasium, lyceum, and extra-school education. The transfer with special destination is carried out by the Ministry of Finance, in line with the allocation formula proposed every year by the Ministry of Education and is approved by the Government. The allocation formula is regulated by the Government Decision 868/2014. The latest updates to the costing formula were adopted by the Government Decision 1026/2023 and will enter into force as of September 2024.

For preschools, the cost is determined by expenses incurred in the previous year. The allocated resources are mainly directed towards the payment of the salaries of the employees from the preschool institutions, the provision of the children's food and the expenses for the utilities and capital costs.

Given that refugees have additional educational needs, such as, for example, potential additional psychosocial support, learning the language of instruction, catch-up classes and so on, a percentage increase (in the preschool level) and refugee coefficient (primary and secondary level) should be added to the unit cost of education to obtain a more accurate unit cost and enable the calculation of the overall cost of including all refugee children in the education system.

The funding formula for the inclusion of refugee children in primary and secondary education should start with the public unit cost of education, adding **refugee education coefficients** to the unit costs to provide additional education services essential to the integration of refugees into educational system. Currently, the public unit cost of education does not include the transportation costs and meals which are covered from the LPAs budget according to the provisions of the national regulations. Additional support services may include, but are not limited to:

* **Language support and catch-up classes:**  In order for refugee children to learn the host country's language, overcome interruptions in schooling and fully benefit from learning opportunities, it is important for schools to provide **early learning assessment of refugee children about to formally enrol in the** school and develop individualized learning plans for each child. This will help teachers identify potential areas where students need further support in including certain subjects as well as language classes. The frequency of the language and catch-up classes may vary depending on the age and area of residence (some of the refugees come from Romanian teaching communities while others are total beginners), and school enrolment period/grade (those who are close to graduation levels need more intensive language training).
* **Psychosocial support:** many displaced children are likely to have been separated from their families or to have witnessed experiences of danger, violence, significant loss, and life-threatening events. Their ability to participate actively and learn in school may be inhibited by these traumatizing experiences, creating a need for regular, specialized group or structured individual psychosocial support.
* **Additional Teachers’ capacity building for refugee inclusion in the education system:** teachers in host communities face unprecedented challenges in delivering quality education, being faced with overcrowded classrooms and refugee children suffering from psychological trauma or physical disability, a situation that is exacerbated by limited teaching resources, monitoring and leadership. It is crucial that they be able to foster a safe and inclusive environment that is conducive to learning. Teachers in schools enrolling refugee children should be receiving additional trainings on inclusive education focusing on inclusion of refugee children and children with disabilities as well as training on anti-bullying and violence to foster social cohesion.
* **Accelerated education programmes (AEPs)** which aim to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children, and youth without any educational background. The goal of AEPs is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.
* **Extra-curricular and afterschool activities:** Offering additional extra-curricular activities in schools enrolling refugee children can foster social cohesion between refugee and Moldovan children and adolescents. Extra-curricular activities such as sports, arts, theatre, and music can be an effective way of building social connections.

To develop an accurate costing analysis of inclusive refugee education and determine the specific package of services to be offered to refugee children from Ukraine in national education institutions of Moldova, an individual expert will be hired. The expert will analyse and propose several options/mechanisms for funding according to the level of education (preschool or school), the package of services to be provided, and funds transfer modalities.

1. **Purpose of work**

The purpose of this assignment is to assist the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) in designing a funding framework, including a funding formula and costings, for the inclusion into the public education system at pre-school, primary, gymnasium and lyceum levels. This framework should be based on universal access and equity – fair and impartial treatment of all children – and consider realistic sources of financing. The expert will also focus on developing recommendations and resource mobilization plans.

1. Objectives

The consultant is expected to:

1. Develop 2-3 possible funding formulas or frameworks that should accompany the proposed funding mechanisms. Consult with UNICEF and receive validation for one of them from the MER;
2. Estimate total spending on inclusion of refugee children in pre-school, primary, gymnasium, and lyceum levels as per the 2-3 possible formulas;
3. Financing concept note and mechanisms for the proposed frameworks (with a focus on national vs. subnational levels);
4. Develop recommendations and resource mobilization plans.

The consultant will perform a detailed analysis of the costs of refugee inclusion into the public education system in Moldova considering additional educational needs. He/she is also expected to draw on international experience to help avoid pitfalls while adapting the financing framework to Moldova’s specific needs and characteristics. The proposed funding options need to be produced in close cooperation with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance.

More specifically, the consultant shall:

* Analyse basic financing of the pre-school and general education (“money follows the pupil”), including variables (school location, number of pupils, pupils’ grade, type of education etc) that were considered in setting up the financing formula.
* Provide recommendations for other conditions that must be in place in parallel to the financing formula suggested to ensure equity and accessibility of services (ex: among children with disabilities, Roma children, children in remote areas, children in small villages, etc.)
* Based on international best practice, the analysis of cost structures, and evidence on outcomes, propose 2-3 formula options for consideration (exact number to be decided upon with UNICEF).  Clearly highlight pros and cons of different proposals. Consider both per capita and lump-sum elements, and/or different coefficients/weights as appropriate, including but not limited to adjusting for: type of service, location in a rural/urban setting, attendance of children with special needs, size of preschool/school, age of children, etc.
* In consultation with national counterparts, select the most appropriate funding formula and framework, as well as financing mechanisms, for the inclusion of refugee children in pre-school/school levels.
* Based on the current capacities of central level authorities, Local Public Authorities (LPA) level 1, and LPA level 2, suggest the most appropriate financing scheme and mechanisms.
* Provide recommendations and resource mobilization plan.

1. Details of how the work should be delivered

The period for the assignment is tentatively June – September 2024. The Individual Consultant will work under the supervision of UNICEF Moldova Social Policy Officer and in close collaboration with the staff of the Ministries of Education and Finance, and relevant experts in the field.

The consultant will develop activities according to the schedule below, and in close consultation with UNICEF Moldova.

1. Deliverables and delivery dates (based on the work plan)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nr.** | **Activity** | **Deliverables** | **Tentative deadlines\*** |
|  | * Analyze basic financing of the pre-school and general education (“money follows the pupil”), including variables (school location, number of pupils, pupils’ grade, type of education, etc.) that were considered in setting up the financing formula. * Conduct a desk review of existing documents and map all educational services provided to refugees included in pre-school/school public education system | Inception Report including:   * Analysis and summary of best regional and international practices of refugee inclusion into the public education system * Analysis of the current financing mechanism of general education system (preschool/school levels) * Mapping all educational services provided to refugees included in pre-school/school public education system at the national level. * Methodology on the development of the funding formula for preschool/school level. | 5 working days |
|  | * Based on international best practice, the analysis of cost structures, and evidence on outcomes, propose 2-3 formula options for consideration) * Provide recommendations for other conditions that must be in place in parallel to the funding formula suggested to ensure equity and accessibility of services (to children with disabilities, Roma children or to children in remote areas or to children in small villages, etc.) | Draft Report including:   * 2-3 costing formula options for consideration clearly highlighting pros and cons of different proposals * Simulation models (3-years) of proposed formulas and frameworks including mapping of all expected allocations for refugee inclusion in pre-school and general education under the assumptions of different models. Simulations should take demographic, economic and other factors into account and demonstrate impact on the education and national budget. * PPT on financing options most suited to the Republic of Moldova, including best practice examples from countries having implemented similar funding frameworks for inclusion of refugees in preschool/school education, lessons learned and simulation models on proposed formulas developed | 5 working days  5 working days  2 working days |
|  | * In consultation with the national counterparts, select the most appropriate financing formula for inclusion of refugees in pre-school/school levels and resource mobilization plan * Based on current LPA 1 and LPA 2 capacity, suggest most appropriate funding scheme | * Draft financing formula for inclusion of refugees in pre-school/school levels and most appropriate funding mechanism and resource mobilization plan * PPT on financing options most suited to the Republic of Moldova including best practice examples in countries having implemented per-capita funding mechanisms (PCF) at preschool/school levels, lessons learned and simulation models on proposed formulas | 5 working days  2 working days |
|  | Present the final funding formula for inclusion of refugee children in preschools/schools, financing mechanism and resource mobilization plan | Presentation delivered to the national stakeholders | 1 working days |
|  | Based on received inputs from the national counterparts, finalize the funding formula and financing mechanism | Final Report, including the final version of the funding framework | 5 working days |

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

Changes to the agreed dates for deliverables must be mutually agreed in writing by UNICEF and the consultant, and in consultation with Ministry of Education and Research (MER).

1. Reporting requirements

The selected consultant will report to the UNICEF Moldova Social Policy Officer, who will regularly communicate with the selected consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support so to achieve objectives of the consultancy. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Social Policy Officer and Social Policy Specialist, with the Education Specialist in copy.

The consultant will produce the above-mentioned deliverables and products during the assignment implementation. All deliverables will be prepared and presented electronically to UNICEF for approval, and prior validation by MER. The reporting language is English. 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 of cooperation and communication with UNICEF and with counterparts.

1. Qualifications and experience

* Advanced degree in finance and/or economics or related field.
* Proven experience in developing per capita funding formulas at preschool/or general education levels in at least two countries and advising during implementation.
* Excellent analytical capacity, including authoring at least 3 publications in the field of education financing, human development, and statistics.
* Sound knowledge of financing mechanisms in the education sector, especially at pre-school/school levels. Knowledge of international experience of investment and funding in preschool/school education and social budgeting systems (preferably in CEE/CIS)
* Demonstrated experience in the field in CEE/CIS region including Moldova is a strong asset.
* Excellent writing and communication skills in English required, knowledge of Romanian and/or Russian would be an advantage.
* Experience in working with UNICEF or other UN Agencies will be an asset.
* Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate and work well with diverse people.

1. Content of technical proposal

Relevant experience with similar type of assignments (max 300 words)

Proposed approach and methodology (max 1500 words), including:

* 1. Timeline and milestones
  2. Risk and mitigation measures
  3. Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them

Annex: Short Sample or links to related work previously conducted by the consultant

In addition, please provide your *Curriculum Vitae*.

1. Financial Proposal

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify an all-inclusive fee in USD, requested for the deliverables described in the Terms of Reference, as well breakdown of international travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) costs if applicable (as specified in paragraph 12 of this ToR).

Other expenses 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 12 and 13 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:

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| --- | --- |
| **Deliverable (delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)** | **Proportion of payment** |
| Annotated Report Outline and methodology | 30% |
| Costing analysis report (formulas, costing scenarios, transfer mechanism, recommendations, and resource mobilization plan) | 70% |

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 supervision arrangements

The selected consultant will work under the oversight of Social Policy Specialist of UNICEF Moldova and in close collaboration with MER and MoF. Payments will be rendered upon written approval by the UNICEF Supervisor, and contingent upon the quality of deliverables.

1. Work location and official travel involved

The work will be done remotely with a possible visit to Chisinau (up to 7 days) to meet with the national stakeholders. If needed, meetings will be organized online, and the UNICEF office will facilitate introductions to key informants.

1. Support provided by UNICEF

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the selected 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 facilitate the coordination with other UN agencies and will also mediate with Government entities for data sharing and access.

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:

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 Consultant will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines. 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 DHR PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS, together with the Notification letter, the consultant 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.