

August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Consultancy for Educational Measurement and Learning Assessment Researcher – Data Must Speak (DMS) Education Unit**

#### **1. Background:**

The UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti (UNICEF-Innocenti) is the dedicated research office of UNICEF. It undertakes and commissions research on emerging or current issues of relevance for children in order to inform the strategic directions, policies and programmes of UNICEF and its partners. The Office explores emerging issues, identifies research gaps, brings together existing research, and supports or undertakes new research and data collection to address critical questions and to inform global debates.

Data Must Speak (DMS), a programme led by UNICEF headquarters and implemented with Governments, UNICEF Regional Offices, and Country Offices since 2014, provides country-specific technical support and capacity strengthening to Ministries of Education and school communities for more effective and transparent data use at school and system levels. DMS also includes a research component whose new phase - led by UNICEF-Innocenti - has been approved for funding, for the next three years, as part of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)/International Development Research Centre (IDRC) global programme for Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX).

Despite the learning crisis, even in the most difficult contexts, there are some diamonds, the “positive deviant” schools: those that are outperforming (in terms of learning, gender, and equity) other schools in the same context and with the same resources. Unfortunately, most of the time, the “positive deviant” schools are not identified and very little is known about the “positive deviant” practices and behaviours active in those schools (or around) that make them perform better than the others. And even less is known about the “implementation gap” in service delivery: how to incentivize and scale up these “positive deviant” practices and behaviours in the less performing schools.

The DMS new research component has been designed to address these gaps in evidence generation and use at country level for policy and implementation changes, using mixed methods including quantitative research, social science, behavioural insights approaches, scaling science, and implementation research. The research project is taking place in eight countries: Nepal, Lao PDR, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Zambia, Togo, Niger, and Madagascar.

#### **2. Objective(s):**

The consultant will support the DMS team to implement this mixed-methods education research for supporting the education system to identify positive deviant school-level practices/behaviours, finding how to optimally scale them to low-performing schools, and more generally, strengthening data use within Ministries of Education.

The consultant will support the smooth implementation of the Innocenti-Education Data Must Speak research component by supporting Ministries of Education in i) mapping and linking existing learning assessment data to administrative datasets (EMIS, household surveys); ii) contributing to the selection and development of metrics to identify positive deviant schools in each given context; and iii) contributing to country, regional, and global synthesis reports. Those tasks will be done hand-in-hand with Ministries of Education, UNICEF country offices, regional offices and headquarters and development partners at country level and will put emphasis on ‘learning-by-doing’ capacity strengthening activities.

### 3. Specific activities to be completed to achieve the objectives:

To achieve the objectives above, the consultants will perform the following activities:

- Map and evaluate the reliability, validity, comparability, and granularity of existing learning assessment systems and related data using established methodologies in DMS countries (for example: national end-of-cycle/sub-cycle examination results, national and international sample-based learning assessments such as EGRA/EGMA; PASEC; SACMEQ; SEA-PLM; PISA; MICS foundational skills tests and others);
- Provide guidance on the appropriateness of the existing learning assessment data and how they may be used for DMS research purposes;
- Collaborate with the DMS Quantitative Researcher to link the learning assessment data to other relevant education datasets.;
- Contribute to the selection and development of school indices and metrics to identify the contextual factors and resources that are associated with school performance (in terms of learning outcomes, equity and retention) from previously merged datasets and other existing school indices in countries that have received previous DMS technical support;
- Contribute to the categorization of schools according to their context, resources and performance to identify positive deviant schools (i.e. schools that are performing better than others in comparable environments);
- Support the DMS research team in writing country, regional, and global level reports and other dissemination outputs (policy briefs, blog posts, PowerPoint presentations...).
- Strengthen the capacity of Ministries of Education and UNICEF field offices through trainings and 'learning-by-doing' activities in the areas of educational measurement and learning assessment;
- Provide guidance and quality assurance on educational measurement and learning assessment to Ministries of Education and UNICEF field offices;
- Act, as required, as a UNICEF resource person in relevant conferences, workshops and meetings, including for dissemination of key research outcomes for effective use at country level.

### 4. Specific outputs/products/results with delivery dates:

Specific outputs and delivery dates are as follows:

Deliverables	Estimated number of days	Estimated Deliverable deadline
Review and mapping of existing learning assessment systems and data and brief on how they can be used in DMS research in 4 countries.	25	15 October, 2020
Review and mapping of existing learning assessment systems and data and brief on how they can be used in DMS research in 4 additional countries.	20	30 November, 2020
Support to the linking of learning assessment data to other education datasets, in relevant countries	5	31 December, 2020
Support to the development of school indices and to the associated categories of schools according to contextual factors, resources and performance in learning	15	31 March, 2021
Support the synthesis of results for country/regional/global level dissemination outputs	15	15 August, 2021

**5. Qualifications and/or specialized knowledge/experience required and desirable for undertaking the assignment:**

- Advanced university degree in psychometrics, learning assessment, statistics, education or related social sciences.
- A minimum of five years of progressively responsible professional work experience at national or international levels in the area of educational measurement and learning assessments, with developing country level experience essential;
- Strong research and data analysis skills and demonstrated experience in learning assessment projects, methods, and analysis;
- Good knowledge of statistical analysis software packages (e.g. Stata, SPSS, R...);
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Demonstrated ability to work well as part of a team and to forge and manage partnerships with internal and external stakeholders;
- Commitment to UNICEF's core values of care, respect, integrity, transparency, and accountability;
- Ability to work in a multicultural, multi-ethnic environment. Experience working in the UN or other international development organizations is an asset;
- Fluency in English required; Fluency in French is highly desirable; Fluency in another UN language is an asset.

**6. Duration of the consultancy:**

The consultant will work part-time over a period of 11.5 months (total of 80 working days, with a starting date planned for September 1, 2020).

**7. Supervision and work arrangements:**

The consultant will be working remotely and will report to the DMS Research Manager. The consultant will work closely with the other DMS staff and consultants from the education and other units. The consultant will travel to at least 6 of the programme countries where the research portfolio is implemented for quality implementation of the activities. Travel plans might vary based on the evolving COVID-19 health pandemic.