

## Terms of Reference

### For the establishment of an Institutional Contract

<i>Title:</i>	Institutional Consultancy for Baseline Study in 10 Pilot Schools to Inform the Development of an Inclusive School Model under the SmartEd Project
<i>Consultancy Mode:</i>	<i>International</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>National</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Type of Contract:</i>	<b><i>Institutional Contract</i></b>
<i>Mode of Selection:</i>	<i>Competitive</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Single Source</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Location</i>	<i>Kyrgyz Republic</i>
<i>Travel</i>	<i>In country travel</i>
<i>Language (s)</i>	<i>English and Russian</i>
<i>Duration of Contract:</i>	<i>April – July 2026 (4 months)</i>

#### 1. Background

The education system of the Kyrgyz Republic is undergoing a period of significant transformation, guided by national strategic priorities outlined in the National Development Strategy 2018-2040, the National Development Program 2026, and the ambitious Altyn Kazyk Programme. To support these reforms, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), has launched "The Joint ISDB/GPE Smart-Ed Project For Improving Access to and Quality of Inclusive Learning Opportunities for All Children in the Kyrgyz Republic (KGZ-1030)".

UNICEF is the lead technical partner for managing and implementing the **Component 3** of the SmartEd Project that focuses on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and **strengthening the system's capacity for inclusive education** for providing equitable and quality learning opportunities for all pre-school and school-aged children.

UNICEF supports the Ministry of Education in strengthening institutional and school-level capacity to operationalize inclusive education as a core priority of the national education reform. Although inclusive education is reflected in policy frameworks, implementation remains limited due to insufficient teacher competencies for inclusive teaching and learning, lack of inclusive school culture and policy, frail school-based mechanisms for engagement of parents and collaboration with community-based services, lack of inclusive learning environment, school leadership. In addition, the existing monitoring systems are exhausted and there is limited evidence of what effective inclusion looks like in the Kyrgyz context. This translates into lack of adequate support for children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups and their exclusion from learning.

To address these challenges, UNICEF will support the Ministry of Education in piloting an Inclusive School Model in 10 selected schools across the country. These schools will serve as demonstration and learning hubs ("living laboratories") to generate evidence and practical lessons to inform national scale-up.

To inform the design of this pilot model, UNICEF seeks to conduct a comprehensive baseline study using the Whole School Approach to Inclusive Education, which examines the enabling conditions required across all dimensions of the school ecosystem. This study will serve as a baseline assessment rather than a pilot evaluation. It will generate baseline data that can be compared with endline findings following the implementation of the Inclusive School Mode.

This Terms of Reference seeks to engage a qualified institution to support the design and delivery of the Baseline Study in 10 potential inclusive schools in Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the Altyn Kazyk Education Reform Programme.

## 2. Purpose and specific objectives

### 2.1 Overall Purpose

The purpose of this consultancy is to conduct a comprehensive baseline study of inclusive education readiness in 10 pilot schools in order to inform the design, implementation and monitoring of the national Inclusive School Model. The study will also generate evidence to support policy dialogue with and among the Ministry of Education and development partners on national scale-up of inclusive education reforms in Kyrgyzstan.

The baseline study will examine the policy, pedagogical, and governance conditions required for mainstream schools to transition toward inclusive education practices. It will assess the current status of school leadership, teaching practices, learning environments, student support systems and collaboration with families and community services. The study will identify systemic gaps, establish baseline indicators related to the required actionable changes for strengthening inclusive education at school and system levels.

### 2.2 Specific Objectives of the Study:

The baseline study will pursue the following objectives:

1. Assess the current readiness of selected schools to implement inclusive education using the Whole School Approach framework.
2. Examine school leadership, governance, and policy (including in-service professional development programmes, EMIS/data collection policies and roles, etc) environment supporting inclusive education.
3. Assess teacher competencies and classroom practices related to inclusive pedagogy.
4. Assess accessibility and inclusiveness of school infrastructure and learning environments.
5. Analyse availability and coordination of support services, including referral mechanisms with health, social protection and community services.
6. Assess behavioural determinants influencing inclusive education practices among teachers, students and caregivers, including attitudes, social norms and perceived barriers to inclusion.
7. Establish baseline data on access, participation and learning for children with disabilities and other vulnerable learners.
8. Provide evidence-based recommendations at school and systems level to inform the design of the national Inclusive School Pilot Model and its monitoring framework, including future roll-out.

## 3. Scope of activities (Description of the assignment)

The consultancy will conduct the baseline assessment in 10 selected pilot schools across Kyrgyzstan. The baseline assessment will be guided by a Whole School Approach Framework that will be made available upon commencement of the assignment.

The study will assess inclusive education across the **Whole School Approach** Framework dimensions that schools will use for ongoing self-assessment and the development of inclusive school action plans. The process will actively engage the Ministry of Education and relevant national institutions throughout the design, data collection,

validation, and analysis phases to strengthen national capacity to assess, plan, and monitor inclusive education using standardized tools and data-driven approaches

The baseline study will also incorporate strong capacity-strengthening and inter-sectoral dimensions. The study will also examine linkages between education, social protection, and health services, with particular attention to mechanisms for identification, referral, and support for children with disabilities and other vulnerable learners.

The Whole School Approach Framework includes the following dimensions and sub-dimensions:

### **1. Inclusive School Leadership and Governance**

- School leadership commitment to inclusion
- School policies and development plans supporting inclusive education
- Internal coordination mechanisms and inclusive school management
- Data collection and Use for planning and monitoring inclusion

### **2. Inclusive Teaching and Learning**

- Teacher competencies in inclusive pedagogy
- Differentiated instruction practices
- Individual learning needs assessment and support planning
- Classroom management and learner participation
- Use of assistive technologies and adapted materials

### **3. Inclusive Learning Environment**

- Physical accessibility of school infrastructure
- Classroom layout and learning spaces
- Availability of learning and teaching materials for diverse learners
- Availability of assistive devices and accessibility tools

### **4. Student Support Systems**

- Identification and referral mechanisms for children with disabilities
- Multidisciplinary support services (psychologists, special educators, social workers)
- Collaboration with health and social protection services

### **5. School Culture and Participation**

- Assessment of behavioural and social norms related to disability inclusion, including attitudes of teachers, students and parents toward children with disabilities and inclusive education practices
- Participation of children with disabilities in school life
- Anti-bullying and child protection practices
- Student voice and participation

### **6. Community and Inter-sectoral Partnerships**

- Engagement of parents and caregivers
- Collaboration with community organizations
- Linkages with health and social services

### **7. Access, Participation and Learning**

- Enrolment and attendance patterns
- Dropout risks

- Learning outcomes and participation of children with disabilities and vulnerable learners
- Gender and equity considerations

#### 4. Methodology

The consultancy will apply a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Methods may include:

- Desk review of national policies, school plans and administrative data
- School readiness assessment using structured tools
- Classroom observations
- Teacher surveys and assessments of national teacher training programmes against competencies of the Teacher Profile for Inclusive Education
- Interviews with school leadership
- Focus group discussions with teachers, students and parents
- Infrastructure accessibility assessments
- Stakeholder consultations with local authorities and service providers
- Participatory research methods (*Note: UNICEF will provide the research guide and capacity building to the consultancy company in participatory research*).

The consultancy institution will propose a statistically and operationally feasible sampling strategy for schools, teachers, students and parents, ensuring representativeness across gender, disability and other vulnerability characteristics. The strategy should be developed by employed 3 experts (at least) of the consultancy institution, including education expert, inclusive education expert and research and data specialist.

The methodology should develop quantitative and qualitative indicators that will serve as reference points for subsequent monitoring. The study design should ensure that the baseline indicators allow for future comparison during the endline evaluation of the Inclusive School Model. The methodology should therefore ensure consistency in sampling, data collection tools, and measurement indicators as well as robust quality assurance procedures, including enumerator training and a protocol for addressing inconsistent or missing data, that will enable longitudinal comparison across pilot schools. It should also ensure:

- Alignment with the UNICEF inclusive education framework
- Use of disaggregated data (gender, disability, vulnerability)
- Participation of children and parents
- Ethical research standards and safeguarding procedures

#### 5. Key deliverables

No	Deliverable	Description	Timelines	Payment
1	Inception Report	Detailed data collection and analysis plan outlining key research questions, analytical framework, indicators to be measured, and proposed quantitative and qualitative analytical methods in line with the Whole School Approach framework. The inception report should also provide a brief fieldwork	20 days after contract signature	30% of the contract amount

		<p>readiness plan (focal points, visit calendar, and risk log).</p> <p>Developed a detailed sampling strategy, including clear justification of school selection criteria and stratification methodology. The selection of 10 project schools will be coordinated with MOE and will be based on the criteria identified by UNICEF and MOE.</p> <p>The contractor is responsible for ensuring ethical review of the proposed study design, methodology and tools.</p>		
2	Data Collection Tools	Validated tools aligned with Whole School Approach indicators, tool testing and revision, training of enumerators/research personnel	8 days	
3	Field data collection report	Data collection will include data from 10 project schools with data collected based on finalized methodology and plan of school visits.	20 days	30% of the contract amount
4	Data cleaning and analysis	Cleaned and validated dataset and completed quantitative/qualitative data analysis aligned with the assessment framework.	10 days	
5	Draft Baseline Report preparation	Preliminary findings, baseline indicators and recommendations	10 days	
6	Validation Workshop	Presentation of findings with MoE and partners	3 days	40% of the contract amount
7	Final Baseline Report	Final analytical report with actionable recommendations and baseline indicators and a ppt in English and Kyrgyz languages	5 days	
			Total: 76 days	

## 6. Ethical considerations

The contractor will be responsible for considering ethical issues concerning the participation of children/adolescents and/or professional participating in the study, as well as those related to the researched topic.

The contractor will ensure that the process is in line with the [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) Ethical Guidelines](#). The contractor should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with children, adolescents, vulnerable groups, stakeholders etc. Furthermore, the contractor should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the analysis, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The methodology must comply with UNICEF Procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis [UNICEF Procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis](#)

The proposed research methodology and report should include a section identifying anticipated or actual ethical issues as well as measures and methods to address or mitigate these issues, for example: collecting data directly from stakeholders, protecting anonymity and confidentiality of individual information sources, etc. Use of documents and information provided by UNICEF or acquired during the contract implementation is allowed only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

## 7. Management and supervision

*Supervisors: Education Officer*

*in close consultation with the Chief of Education Section, the SBC Specialist, SBC Advisor ECA, SBC Consultant by ECA*

The consultancy company will work closely with:

- Ministry of Education
- Local education authorities
- Selected pilot schools
- UNICEF technical teams
- Programme Management Unit for the SmartEd Project

## 8. Qualification requirements/specialised knowledge/experience required to complete the task

The Tenderer must satisfy the following requirements:

- At least 8 years of experience in the field of design, development and implementation of education system analysis, research, surveys or programme design;
- Successful experience as prime contractor in the execution of at least 2 successful projects (contracts) of complexity comparable to the proposed contract within the last 3 (three) years;
- The Tenderer shall provide at least 2 (two) customer-signed project references of national and/or international successfully implemented surveys and/or consultancy services;
- Experience working with UN agencies or international organizations is an asset.

### Key Experts

The proposed team should include:

Team Leader / Education Specialist

- Advanced degree in education, social sciences or related field
- Minimum 8 years of experience in education policy or research

Inclusive Education Expert

- Demonstrated expertise in disability-inclusive education
- Experience in teacher training and inclusive pedagogy

Research and Data Specialist

- Expertise in mixed-methods research and data analysis

Field Researchers / Enumerators

### Request for submission

- A comprehensive technical proposal with proposed methodology/approach to the activities and expected results, showing understanding of the tasks and work plan (no price information should be contained in the technical proposal) including proposed management of the tasks/activities. The proposed team shall include a technical lead (coordinator) with experts in relevant fields.
- A copy of the organization profile.
- The proposed technical team curriculum vitae (CVs).
- At least 2 successful projects (contracts) of complexity comparable to the proposed contract within the last 3 (three) years
- At least 2 (two) customer-signed project references of national and/or international successfully implemented surveys and/or consultancy services
- A valid Legal Business Registration Certificate (state registration).

### 9. Evaluation process and methods

The evaluation of proposals will be conducted in three phases.

1. Preliminary review for completeness of required documentation.
2. Technical Evaluation of technical proposals (80% out of 100%).
3. Financial Evaluation of the financial proposals (20% out of 100%).

1. Preliminary review: All the proposals received will be checked for completeness and compliance. The technical proposal must be separated from the financial proposal. Proposals that do not meet the preliminary review will be invalidated and not considered for technical evaluation.

2. Technical Evaluation: All the proposals that meet the preliminary requirements will be evaluated technically. The maximum score is 80 points and the minimum passing score is 64 points. In making the final decision, UNICEF considers both technical and financial aspects. The Evaluation Team first reviews the technical aspect of the offer followed by the review of the financial offer of the technically compliant vendors. Each proposal shall be evaluated based on the technical evaluation criteria and bidders' qualifications listed below.

#### Technical evaluation:

The proposals will be evaluated against the following technical criteria:

Item	Technical Evaluation Criteria/Qualifications	Max. Points
1	Overall Response	20
1.1	Completeness of the proposal and responsiveness to the TOR. Quality of the proposed methodology, detailed timeline, consultations, data collection, analysis methods and presentation. The proposal should detail the proposed approaches based on the TOR requirements. <b>(20 pts)</b>	
2	Organizational Experience in the field of education research and Key Personnel	60
2.1	At least 8 years of experience in the field of design, development and implementation of education system analysis, research, surveys or programme design <b>(20 pts)</b>	
2.2	Successful experience as prime contractor in the execution of at least 2 successful projects (contracts) of complexity comparable to the proposed contract within the last 3 (three) years <b>(20 pts)</b>	

2.3	Availability of at least 2 (two) customer-signed project references of national and/or international successfully implemented surveys and/or consultancy services <b>(10 pts)</b>	
2.4	Compliance of the profile of the key personnel to the ToR requirements <b>(10 pts)</b>	
	<b>Total Technical Score</b>	<b>80</b>

### 10. Financial Proposal Evaluation

Interested bidders are required to submit on a separate envelope their financial offer which should detail the rate per technical team member in relation to the number of days the team member will work on the project. Include the cost of services per quarter related to deliverables and dedicated human resources, such as overall management and technical specialists.

All travel and the related budget should be part of the proposal. The partner institution will be responsible for administering its own travel and will be responsible for all travel costs including flights, daily subsistence allowance, etc.

The price of each of the technically compliant proposals shall be considered only after evaluation of the above technical criteria. A maximum 20 point assigned to the financial proposal will be allocated to the lowest financial proposal. As a result of the financial evaluation, the points of each proposal will be taken into further consideration in the final evaluation.

The bidders should ensure that all pricing information is provided in accordance with the following:

- a) The currency of the proposal shall be in Kyrgyz Som and invoicing must be in the same currency.
- b) All prices/rates quoted must be exclusive of all taxes as UNICEF is a tax-exempt organization

### 11. Award of Contract

UNICEF will make an institutional contract award to a bidder who submitted highly technically compliant proposal. The awards will be made starting from the highest-scoring proposal as a result of the combined technical and financial evaluation scores. Overall, the awards shall depend on several criteria, including the needs, prices offered and what provided the best value for money, and is in the best interests of UNICEF.