**PRIMARY EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

for Individual Consultant for Designing Programming Options for Implementation of Learning Recovery and Tutoring Programs in North Macedonia

1. **Background of the Project**

The Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia (MoES) and aims to improve conditions for learning in primary education. The project will be implemented country-wide, in urban, peri-urban and rural locations across the county. North Macedonia has recently undertaken important reforms of the preschool education and care system. To capitalize further on this important investment, the overall project will support the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia’s (MoES) to invest more, and more effectively, in the quality of teaching and learning in primary education. The PEIP project is organized around three main elements that need to be aligned in order to be complementary to each other. Two are system-level reforms regarding the development of a comprehensive national assessment program and enhancing competences of teachers, multi professional support teams and school leaders that would create the necessary enabling conditions, so the school teams are empowered with data on learning and up-to-date training. The third focuses on school-level interventions. Additionally, the PEIP project would strengthen sector management, project management and monitoring & evaluation.

**Specific information/background regarding the assignment**

North Macedonia’s Human Capital Index is lower than the average for its region and income group. Poor educational outcomes largely explain this loss of lifetime productivity. Children in North Macedonia can expect to complete 11 years of preprimary, primary, and secondary school by age 18. However, when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning, the result is equivalent to 7.3 years of education, with a learning gap of 3.7 years. Gaps in human capital start early and expand over time. The education system fails to provide students with the skills they need to successfully complete each stage and move confidently to the next. System deficiencies are visible even in the early years of primary education. The current student assessment system does not adequately inform teaching and learning processes at the system or school levels. International student assessment (EGRA, EGMA, TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA) indicate significant learning deficiencies, which start in the first few years of schooling. System deficiencies are visible even in the early years of primary education. EGRA and EGMA[[1]](#footnote-1) assessments (USAID 2017) give an indication of literacy and numeracy in early primary years. Even though there are improvements in reading skills between grades 2 and 3, the results for oral reading fluency and comprehension (the sub-tasks most highly correlated with literacy) are still significantly below international benchmarks. Results also differ by the language of the test taker, particularly for the more advanced reading sub-tasks, with Macedonian-speaking students doing better than Albanian and Turkish-speaking students in these.

Despite the swift education sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic in North Macedonia, learning losses are anticipated, requiring mitigation and recovery measures. During school closures, the Ministry responded to the immediate health risks to pupils and the education workforce from COVID-19 by closing schools in March, 2020. Distance learning measures were put in place with the intention of covering primary and secondary education in all areas of the country. Despite the significant efforts made by the government to ensure continuity of learning, the management and organization of the learning process was left largely to the discretion of individual schools and teachers, creating unequal opportunities for learning and leading to significant learning losses, on top of already existing challenges with learning outcomes and learning inequality that preceded COVID-19. While the new Government program places a big emphasis on distance learning education, and digitalization overall, the pandemic revealed that the education system is facing a myriad of preexisting issues to going digital: including, access to broadband connectivity, particularly for marginalized and low-income populations, and low ICT adoption. According to the recent UNICEF survey (July 2020) with selected North Macedonian school principals, teachers and parents, almost 77 percent of the teachers could not maintain regular communication with students during the distance learning. Close to 80 percent of parents – who play a critical role for students’ achievements – had difficulty supporting their kids with distance learning and close to 65 percent had technical difficulties accessing necessary equipment (including lack of connectivity, computer, printer, etc.). Such findings reinforce the need for further support on digital education. Disadvantaged and vulnerable students face the greatest risk of learning loss. Primary schools have been reopened in October, 2020, but only for students up to third grade while for the students up to nine grade a distance learning were ensured. In the school year 2021, the education process started with the students physical presences, except for several municipalities while in the current 2022 schools are fully opened and back to regular classes. Now when students are back to school, the Ministry will continue to ensure the health and wellbeing of students and the workforce, while planning mitigation and learning recovery measures for all students after the unanticipated break by putting into place diagnostic student assessments, catch-up sessions, and training on remedial approaches for weak students.

1. **Objective of the assignment**

The main objective of the consultancy is to hire an individual consultant to provide technical assistance to the MOES in providing options (including rational, draft designs, implementation arrangements, estimated gains and cost) for establishing mitigation and learning recovery measures for all students in need that are most severely affected by the learning challenges caused by the COVID 19 pandemic (Roma students, students with special education needs, students from low income families, etc.), by developing learning recovery and tutoring activities or other learning assistance modalities.

1. **Scope of work**

The selected consultant should work closely with the MoES and PEIP Project Management Unit to develop a set of programming options for MoES to review, in order to tackle the students that are most affected by the learning challenges caused by the COVID 19 pandemic (3 learning recovery program designs (prototypes), based on existing international evidence, implementation modalities, and cost implications.

The consultant is expected to perform the following activities:

**Activity 1: Inception Phase (Preparatory activities)** **–** The Consultant is expected to:

* Identify learning challenges for primary school students in North Macedonia based on background reports from international assessments conducted in the country; The learning challenges are to be evaluated also in the context of the future employability of the students.
* Review empirical evidence and implementation modalities for best practice learning recovery and tutoring programs in countries with similar socio-economic and cultural situation, as well as selected best practiced mainstream programs implemented at regional or national scale elsewhere in the world.

**Activity 2: Develop the Learning Recovery and Tutoring Programs –** The Consultant is expected

* to propose and develop 3 learning recovery program designs based on existing international evidence, that are suitable for the country context. All of the learning recovery programs shall be developed in the context of the improvement of the student learning outcomes that are relevant for their future employability based on the labor market demand in the country.
* Specify objectives for learning recovery programs and likely target audiences (e.g. grade levels, curriculum subjects, age groups, geographic location, etc.);
* Identify mode of program delivery (timing, location etc);
* Propose identification and selection criteria for the individuals that will deliver the program;
* Learning Recovery and Tutoring Program duration, frequency and length;
* Identify cost implications and materials and/or equipment needed ;
* Present and discuss the learning recovery and tutoring program with Ministry of education and Science, PMU and agree upon the program.

**Activity 3: Assist in the development and the implementation of the evaluation matrix for the selected Learning Recovery and Tutoring Programs**

* Upon selection of 1 or more interventions the consultant shall assist in drafting a TOR for selection of consultant that will develop and implement the diagnostic assessment tools to measure implementation fidelity and impacts of learning recovery programs; This will allow for charting of the learning progress by comparing pre **–** and post **–** tests results (a learners’ current knowledge – prior to the intervention and a learners’ knowledge after the intervention);

**Activity 4: Development of the Program Delivery Manual**

* Upon selection of 1 or more interventions from the Ministry and drafting of the impact evaluation matrix the consultant shall finalize the design of the program and work together with the PMU in the development of a Program Delivery Manual

**Activity 5: Supervision of the pilot-phase of the selected program**

* Supervise in close cooperation with PEIP PMU and impact evaluation consultant the pilot-phase of the selected program implementation;
* Revise the program design and Program Delivery Manual (if necessary) based on the findings and data collected during the pilot phase from the impact evaluation consultant and the feedbacks from the community and stakeholders group;

1. **Reporting obligations and deliverables**

* Inception report that identifies the learning challenges of the primary school students and empirical evidence for best practice learning recovery and tutoring programs.
* Report on design and implementation of 3 Learning Recovery and Tutoring programming options related to the tasks defined under activity 2;
* TOR for impact evaluation consultant;
* Learning Recovery and Tutoring program and Program Delivery Manual
* Final Report incorporating revisions to the Learning Recovery and Tutoring program and Program Delivery Manual (if any)

All deliverables shall be prepared in English and Macedonian language and will be reviewed and approved by the Client.

1. **Minimum Qualifications**

* An advanced university degree (Master’s or higher) in social sciences, education, psychology, pedagogy, or related fields.
* Strong work experience in education and/or labor market system with reference to research and policy design; Knowledge and work in education/labor market area in the country shall be considered as an advantage.
* Previous work experience in Western Balkan in education and/or labor market area;
* Work experience in research and/or policy design on World Bank or other IFIs projects shall be considered as an advantage;
* Strong interpersonal skills and ability to dialogue with diverse stakeholders to create consensus around issues and capable of working in multi-cultural environments;
* Strong (written and oral) command of English.

1. **Procurement and Contract arrangements**

The contract for this assignment will be until September 2024. Expected start of services is January, 2023. The contract will be on lump sum basis, and payments shall be based on deliverables acceptable to the Client as per agreed schedule and rates.

1. EGRA and EGMA stand for *Early grade reading/mathematics assessments* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)