**Terms of Reference (TOR)**

**Improving hospital-based education and school reintegration for primary students**

1. **Background:**

The right to education is a fundamental human right, and every child, regardless of their health condition, is entitled to it. Providing educational opportunities to children in hospital settings ensures that they are not deprived of this basic right. It guarantees that they continue to learn and develop, even when faced with significant health challenges. This approach aligns with international conventions and policies that advocate for inclusive education and the right of every child to receive an education, regardless of their circumstances. It also aligns with the North Macedonia legal framework, i.e. Law on Primary Education and “Rulebook for the procedure for selection of primary schools, criteria and process of organizing teaching in hospitals, correctional facilities and at home”

The education of children undergoing hospital treatment is a crucial aspect of their overall well-being, development, and future opportunities. When children are hospitalized for extended periods, they face a range of challenges, both physically and emotionally, that can disrupt their educational progress and social development. These challenges often result in feelings of isolation, anxiety, and a sense of falling behind academically, which can have a long-lasting impact on their confidence and motivation to learn. Therefore, ensuring continuity in their education while they are in the hospital setting is not only important for maintaining their academic progress but also plays a significant role in their emotional and psychological recovery.

Education serves as more than just a means to acquire knowledge; it provides a sense of normalcy and stability in an otherwise uncertain and challenging time. The familiar routine of learning can offer children a comforting structure, helping them stay connected with the outside world, their peers, and their everyday lives. By engaging in educational activities, hospitalized children have the opportunity to focus on something positive and productive, which can significantly reduce feelings of stress, loneliness, and isolation. This sense of engagement helps them maintain a connection to their identity as students and individuals, rather than solely as patients, which is vital for their self-esteem and mental health.

Moreover, continuing education during hospitalization fosters the development of essential cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, which are crucial for their intellectual growth. It also supports the development of social skills, as children interact with teachers, medical staff, and peers in the hospital school environment, helping them stay connected to their communities and promoting a sense of belonging. This interaction is particularly valuable, as it can prevent the child from feeling detached from their usual social environment and peers, ensuring a smoother reintegration into regular school life once they have completed their treatment.

In addition, education is a powerful tool that prepares children for the future. It equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue their goals and ambitions, even in the face of adversity. Hospital-based education ensures that children can continue to progress academically, giving them hope and motivation for their future reintegration into society as active and successful individuals. This preparation is particularly important for children who have faced serious health challenges, as it empowers them to return to their regular lives with confidence and resilience.

**Objective:**

The implementation of hospital-based education, or education of hospitalized[[1]](#footnote-1) children presents unique challenges, requiring collaboration between educators, healthcare professionals, and policymakers. It is essential to put in place a sound system and adapt teaching methods and materials to the individual needs and health conditions of each child, ensuring that the educational process is both flexible and responsive. By doing so, it is expected that hospitalized children would receive the necessary support in maintaining their academic progress, emotional well-being, and social connections, ultimately facilitating a smoother transition back into regular school life after their treatment**.**

**The primary objective of this assignment is to recognize and address the educational needs of hospitalized children and ensure that they do not fall behind in their studies, ultimately supporting their reintegration into regular school life. A secondary objective is to support teachers involved in hospital-based education as well as other teachers in supporting the reintegration of hospitalized students into regular school life.**

1. **Scope of Work:**
* Review of the national legal framework related to education of hospitalized children and current implementation arrangements for provision of such education, as well as identification of the challenges related to the right to education for hospitalized children.
* Analysis of the number of currently hospitalized children including historical data for at least 1 year and a sample-based assessment of the medical limitations and educational needs of hospitalized children
* Arrange a study visit, conference or meeting for at least 8 representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education, University Clinical Center in Skopje, primary schools or other determined stakeholders, with professionals working on hospital-based school programs in an EU country or the region, to exchange knowledge and experiences and learn from best practices.
* Work closely with the MoES, BDE and other stakeholders on creating flexible and adaptable educational activities suitable for a hospital environment.
* Provide training to teachers appointed to provide hospital-based education
* Provide training to selected primary school staff for reintegration of hospitalized children into regular school life
* Monitor the program for a period of at least 6 months and suggest adaptation accordingly
* Develop a sustainability plan, including strategies for funding, resources, and long-term integration into national education and health systems.
* Develop an awareness program and organize educational awareness activities for peers in selected schools aimed at promoting empathy, understanding, and inclusivity, and encouraging a supportive school environment.
1. **Reporting obligations**
2. Inception report including analysis of the legal framework, challenges and preliminary findings related to the number of hospitalized children, educational status, medical limitations and educational needs
3. Training program and training reports
4. Awareness program and report
5. Program monitoring reports
6. Final report including project outcomes, sustainability measures and recommendations
7. **Qualifications and Experience**

The Consultant shall have the following minimum qualifications:

* General experience: At least 5 years of experience in improving child education, social services, healthcare or other child welfare aspects, with a focus on social responsibility activities
* Specific experience: At least 3 assignments/projects/contracts of a similar nature. Similar nature and scope of the assignments are those that have similar activities related to the work with children undergoing or that completed medical treatments in healthcare facilities
* The Consultant shall have the necessary organizational capacity and available appropriate skills among key and support staff. The consulting team assembled to implement the project should be composed of key experts with strong knowledge as per the below requirements and any other support staff as deemed necessary by the Consultant.

The key team of experts shall be able to respond to the following requirements and mandatory area of expertise:

### Education Professional

* Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in education, special education, or a related field.
* At least 5 years of teaching experience, with a focus on special education or working with children facing medical challenges
* Experience designing and implementing flexible educational programs tailored to the needs of students with long-term medical conditions.
* Ability to provide emotional and academic support to children dealing with isolation, stress, and medical challenges.
* Familiarity with digital learning platforms and educational technology that can be integrated into hospital-based education.
* Understanding of education policies and their application in non-traditional or healthcare settings.
* Awareness of developmental psychology and how illness can impact children’s learning abilities.
1. Medical Professional
* Medical degree (MD) with a specialization in pediatrics, child psychiatry, or a related field.
* Minimum of 10 years working with children undergoing long-term or critical medical treatment.
* Experience in integrating mental health support or child development initiatives into healthcare plans.
* Knowledge of the impact of prolonged hospitalization on children’s emotional, mental, and educational well-being
* Experience in collaborating with educators to assess medical and educational needs for hospitalized children.
* Strong interpersonal and communication skills to support both children and their families.
1. Public Awareness Specialist
* University degree in Communications, Public Relations, Media Studies, or a related field.
* Minimum of 10 years of experience in developing and implementing public awareness campaigns, preferably in the field of education or child welfare.
* Proven track record in designing and executing communication strategies that engage diverse audiences, including children, parents, educators, and healthcare professionals.
* Experience in creating multimedia content, such as presentations, brochures, posters, and videos, tailored to raise awareness about specific social issues.
* Strong understanding of age-appropriate messaging and the ability to design campaigns that promote empathy, understanding, and inclusivity among school-aged children.
* Skills in organizing events, workshops, and campaigns in collaboration with educational institutions and other stakeholders to ensure wide-reaching impact.

Duration: The project activities are expected to start December 2024 and last for 12 months.

1. In this ToR the term “hospitalized children” refers to primary education students that are hospitalized for over 3 weeks. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)