

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONTRACTORS



Title of the assignment		
Formative evaluation of key areas of pre-school education policy in Serbia		
Estimated Budget:	Grant:	WBS:
100,000 USD	World Bank (50,000 USD) Evaluation pooled funds (35,000 USD) RR – NON GRANT (15,000)	8970/A0/07/880/004/001
Background and Justification:		
<p>Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a fundamental right for every child and a global commitment by the United Nations under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (sub-goal 4.2), with the target of ensuring that, by 2030, all boys and girls have access to quality ECEC and pre-primary education.</p> <p>Increasing access to and improving the quality and equity of preschool education is a key priority of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia (MoE) in the area of pre-school education, as evidenced by the Strategy for Development of Education in Serbia till 2020 (adopted in 2012), as well as the Strategy for the Development of Education and Care till 2030 (adopted in 2021). Both strategies acknowledge the importance of equal access to quality early childhood education programmes. The latter was preceded by an ex-post analysis of the implementation of the Strategy till 2020, including the level of achievement for specific targets in pre-school education.</p> <p>Based on the strategic priorities, aims and principles of pre-school education specified by the Law on Pre-school Education, the Ministry of Education, with support from the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and in cooperation with pre-school institutions, local self-government units and significant support from partner institutions and organisations, provides continued support in implementing activities and initiatives that contribute to building a quality system of pre-school education for all children of pre-school age and their families.</p> <p>The adoption of the new Preschool Curriculum Framework¹ and corresponding pre-school teachers' professional development, including through the implementation of 3 key projects – Improvement of Preschool Education in Serbia-IMPRES (IPA – EUR 3,75m), Inclusive ECEC (World Bank loan - \$50m), and Support to Preschool Education Reform in Serbia SUPER (IPA EUR 1m) have created the platform for a comprehensive reform of pre-school education over the last decade.</p> <p>Apart from the ex-post analysis of the Strategy for Development of Education in Serbia till 2020, a more focused evaluation of the reform processes in pre-school education is missing, which would contribute to reflecting on the scope, content, quality and sustainability of reform initiatives at different levels (central and local), and through their contextualization serve as the basis of planning support to the development of the system (having in mind the dynamic nature of implementation of policies and measures and desired changes in the system, the complexity of reform processes and conceptual and methodological challenges in their monitoring and valuation). Therefore such evidence is highly necessary in order to ensure an evidence-based continued roll-out of these important reform processes.</p>		

¹ The Framework programme for pre-school education ("Years of Ascent") provides a common conceptual basis for developing an educational and care programme for children from 6 months of age till their enrolment in school. It is focused on benefits and relationships; play and participation as the backbone of the programme; respect of differences; understanding learning as a process of exploration and life/practical experiences; highlights collaboration, partnership and participation through empowerment of children, families and communities.

The evaluation will be instrumental for further analyzing the progress that has been made in Serbia with a focus on outcomes and impacts, but also for looking specifically at key bottlenecks, and exploring where and what types of effective solutions to those bottlenecks have been implemented by the Government of Serbia including those conducted with the support of UNICEF and why they were or were not successful. In particular, there is a need to look at the key accelerators to ensure further advances in the quality, equity and accessibility of pre-school education. Therefore, the evaluation will be important to provide a formative assessment of the most effective and efficient way forward in the area of pre-school education for both the Government of Serbia, UNICEF and other stakeholders supporting the reform initiatives.

Context

In Serbia, preschool education is delivered in pre-school institutions (public and private), exceptionally in schools, and it provides a platform for the overall development of young children. A unique programmatic concept is delivered for children of different age groups: (a) nurseries cater to children aged 6 months to 3 years; (b) kindergartens are for children aged 3 to 5.5 years; and (c) the compulsory 4-hours a day and 9-month-long Preparatory Preschool Program (PPP) is for all children ages 5.5 to 6.5 years, which is free of charge when provided by a public kindergarten or school. However, parents who wish to enroll their children in a full day PPP program and parents of children younger age 5.5 years have to pay a monthly fee.

Serbia is aligned with other European countries on most key indicators of pre-school education provision. These include teacher qualifications, group sizes, and qualitative considerations of quality pedagogy. Serbia has stronger requirements than most of European countries for requirements for head teachers of ECEC, and the amount of continuing professional development (CPD) required of ECEC teachers.

National data show an increase in the coverage of children from the general population from 50.2 per cent in 2014 to 63.9 per cent in 2019, but also that the children from vulnerable groups are still less represented in preschool education, with only 11 percent of children from the poorest quintile, and only 7 percent of children living in Roma settlements attending pre-school.² The law on preschool education (2010, revised in 2017, 2019 and 2021) and relevant by-laws (e.g. Rulebook on specific conditions for determining the priority enrolment in preschool institutions) stipulate that children from vulnerable groups should have priority in enrolment, however data indicate that this is not yet the case.

Additional supply and demand-side factors account for the low and insufficiently equitable access to preschool education, particularly in the age group from 3 to 5.5 years and for the Roma population. These include: (i) insufficient and unevenly distributed infrastructure, with fewer preschools spaces in underdeveloped, low-income (including cities' peripheries), and rural areas and over-crowded preschools where they exist; (ii) a tendency for preschool institutions with long waiting lists to give priority to families with working parents and/or to have non-transparent admission criteria; (iii) parents' lack of understanding of the benefits of ECEC, especially when they can take care of the child at home (e.g. if they are not working) or through relatives, and/or their dissatisfaction with the quality, sensitivity (e.g. to the specific needs of individual children) and practical aspects (e.g. hours of operation) of the service provided; and (iv) other barriers such as language and lack of personal documents and proof of citizenship, even if not officially required for enrolment (especially for Roma and internally displaced families).

The current financing of the ECEC sub-sector is lower than in EU countries and predominantly financed by local self-governments (LSGs) and parents' contributions. Total government expenditure for ECEC in Serbia for 2018 is estimated at around 17 per cent of overall spending on education (34 billion RSD annually). According to the Law on Foundations of the Education System, LSGs play an especially important role for financing preschool education—they contributed 94

² Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, April 2022 and Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys on Status of Women and Children, 2019.

per cent of public funds for pre-primary education as of 2018. They play the central role in funding preschool employees' salaries, as well as maintenance and utilities costs for preschools.

An increase in enrolment in private preschool institutions in recent years, such as in Belgrade and a few other cities around the country, can be attributed to an incentive stemming from contractual arrangements between parents and local self-governments — involving parents who send their children to private kindergartens in a subsidized system. However, the regulatory role of government and local self-governments and monitoring of private preschool education is not yet fully ensured.

Purpose of the assignment:

Object and scope of the evaluation

The object of this evaluation are the national pre-school education reform initiatives between 2012 and 2022 in Serbia.

Pre-school education reform initiatives include measures designed and implemented under national policies, strategies, action plans, programmes, or projects. Aspects of pre-school education reforms which are the object of the evaluation include, but are not limited to initiatives/interventions focused on:

- Advancing the capacities of local self-governments for planning and managing the network of pre-school education with the aim of increasing coverage
- Support to advancing pre-school education quality (with a focus on the absorption of support provided for quality and change achieved)
- Support to advancing pre-school education equity.

The evaluation will focus on network, coverage and equity over the evaluation period, while for quality it will focus on the results of support programme monitoring and self-evaluation of pre-school institutions from 2018 onwards.

The evaluation will take into consideration contextual factors that include a decentralized governance of pre-school education, a ban on public employment for several years of the evaluation period, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic etc.

The evaluation will take into consideration both public and private pre-school provision, where relevant for the aim of the evaluation.

Links with other reforms:

- Education sector: primary and secondary education
- Health sector: early childhood development and early childhood intervention in cases of developmental delays and disability.
- Social protection: reducing child poverty, particularly by increasing the coverage of children with cash transfers: universal and targeted services etc.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a rigorous assessment of the results of the Government of Serbia in preschool education reform during the evaluation period, and UNICEF's and other stakeholders' (government institutions, LSGs, donors, professional associations, civil society organisations etc.) contribution to those results. It will provide an objective perspective of the strengths and weaknesses in the different elements of the reform as well as insights on how to further address possible system level bottlenecks to accelerate the ongoing implementation of the reform and/or

revise the pathways to support change, as well as the aims and mechanisms of change. The evaluative focus is on the contribution of multi-faceted elements of the reform to the observed outcomes and impacts.

Objectives

The evaluation will be formative in nature and forward looking, being an important learning opportunity, both for MoE, UNICEF, as well as other stakeholders involved. In particular, the evaluation has the following objectives:

- To assess the impact of the pre-school education reform on children of pre-school age in the Republic of Serbia based on network, coverage, quality and equity
- To determine the extent how and why actual results for children were achieved, including for children with disabilities, children living in Roma settlements and, rural areas and boys and girls respectively
- Identify the risks, challenges, obstacles and any problems that emerged in the course of the implementation of reform measures that may call for adjustments or corrections
- Understand which elements of the reform worked and which did not and why, and identify those elements of the reform that have the potential of further advancing pre-school education and its sustainability
- Understand UNICEF's and other actors' contribution to the results (outcomes and impact) if any, as well as added value and comparative advantage in supporting national PSE reforms in Serbia.

Stakeholders

The primary audience is the Ministry of Education of the Government of Serbia and UNICEF. Secondary audiences include the Institute for Improvement of Education (IIE), the Institute for Evaluating the Quality of Education, regional school administrations, professional associations of pre-school practitioners and others as relevant.

Approach

The approach and methodology of the evaluation should be guided by the UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy³, the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)⁴, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis⁵ and UNICEF's reporting standards. Proposals should set out an approach and methodology for gathering and analysing data allowing theory-based evaluation of impact and outcome, as well as contribution analysis for measuring the impact of reform as well as UNICEF's contribution to it. It is envisaged that the evaluation team will also adopt a case-study approach of pre-school institutions that are representative of urban and rural, larger and smaller pre-schools, and regional coverage. At least 3 case-study municipalities will be sampled. Moreover, bidders are welcome to suggest ideas about how they would approach this assignment to complete it as efficiently and timely as possible.

It is envisaged that the evaluation will be theory-based. The evaluation questions are formulated as per [OECD-DAC evaluation criteria](#). While five criteria will be included (impact, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability), impact, effectiveness and efficiency should be given the primary focus. Additional cross-cutting issues such as relevant human rights, including child rights, equity and gender equality are also to be examined. The evaluators will be expected to adopt a user-driven approach to the development of an evaluation strategy that will guide the work. It is important to note that the evaluation is focused both on the accountability and learning purposes.

The evaluation team together with UNICEF's Child Rights Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will clarify strategies for meetings the expressed expectations. The team will, furthermore, as part of the inception phase of the evaluation

³ UNICEF 2018 Evaluation Policy <https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2018/14>

⁴ UNEG Norms: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>, UNEG Standards: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

⁵ https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF

reconstruct a TOC based on Government strategic documents related to education and in particular, pre-school education (e.g. the Strategy of development of education in Serbia 2020).

The team will be expected to explain its approach to triangulation and quality assurance of all evaluation deliverables and to clarify, how it plans to engage key evaluation stakeholders to promote participation, ownership and utilization of the evaluation. The evaluation design should also consider the issues of gender and equity and mainstream them throughout the evaluation according to UNICEF Guidance on gender⁶ and disability integration⁷.

Evaluation questions

Impact

(The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.)

- What difference did the reform make to the children of pre-school education age, and under what circumstances?
- Since the reform was initiated, what has been the impact on children of diverse backgrounds attending pre-school education? What challenges remain?
- How, why, in what way did the PSE reforms generate sustained changes in services, financing mechanisms, legal frameworks and policies?
- How, why, and in what ways did the reforms contribute to strengthening the PSE workforce?

Effectiveness

(The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.)

- How, under what circumstances, and why did the PSE reforms generate the desired outcome(s)?
- What are the enabling factors (necessary and/or sufficient) and barriers for the PSE reforms to give results at different levels?

Coherence

(The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.)

- Who were the key influencers to achieve the needed changes? Who needs to be further influenced in the future?
- What key PSE reform partners can influence the further PSE reform implementation, performance, and sustainability?
- What characterizes the links and the relationships among the key actors and how are they working to achieve change (or resist change)?

Efficiency

(The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.)

- Has the PSE reform been successful in ensuring efficiency? Does efficiency vary across contexts or subgroups? If so, by how much and for which groups?
- What resources (national, EU, other donors) were available to carry out the PSE reform? What have been the costs, covered by whom and for how long?

Sustainability

(The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.)

- How are services financed? Does the current financing system ensure full advancement of pre-school education for all children in Serbia? What further policies would need to be put in place towards this goal?

⁶ UNICEF (2019) UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation EVALUATION OFFICE AND GENDER SECTION; UNICEF (2020) "How to" checklist for gender integration into COVID-19 socioeconomic impact assessments and response plans

⁷ UNICEF (2012) Integrated Social Protection Systems Enhancing Equity for Children, UNICEF

- Which policies, measures and activities contributed to the sustainability of preschool education reform?

Work assignments and deliverables

The evaluators are expected to produce the following key deliverables (please also refer to the table below):

1. **Inception report** (in English and Serbian) of maximum 20 pages, excluding annexes, should contain a detailed plan for evaluation, including data collection and analysis methodology and tools, an evaluation matrix (as the main analytical framework against which data will be gathered and analysed and is shaped around the evaluation questions, to be developed by the evaluation team leader and agreed by the evaluation manager prior to the start of field work as part of the inception report). The report will also contain a tentative outline of the final evaluation report, quality assurance arrangements, identification, and analysis of and measures taken to address risks and proposed communication and dissemination plan. Once the inception report is reviewed and the methodology is agreed with UNICEF, the process of data collection will begin.
2. **Final evaluation report** (in English and Serbian) of maximum 40 pages, excluding the executive summary and the annexes, will be reviewed by UNICEF, MoE, ERG, and other stakeholders, and finalized in consultation with UNICEF and MoE.
3. **Power point presentation** (in English and Serbian) summarizing the content of the final report, projections and timelines (see deliverable #3).
4. A short, recorded, **interview** with the team leader

Other interim products may include:

- Minutes of key meetings with the evaluation manager and the ERG;
- Video and photo materials to be collected during the evaluation to enrich presentations and the report; and
- Bi-weekly reports to the evaluation manager to track progress in the implementation of the evaluation.

Reports will be prepared according to the UNICEF Style Guide and UNICEF Brand Toolkit (to be shared with the winning applicants), UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards (2017) and GEROS Quality Assessment System.⁸ All deliverables must be in professional level standard English and must be proofread by a native English speaker. The final report branding will also be aligned with the World Bank project and Ministry of Education brand identity.

The first draft of the final report will be received by the evaluation manager who will work with the evaluators on necessary revisions in consultation with the country and regional teams before sending the report to the ERG for comments. The evaluation manager will consolidate all comments on a response matrix and request the evaluation team to indicate actions taken against each comment in the production of the second draft final and final reports. Products are expected to conform to the stipulated number of pages where that applies. The products of the evaluation will be disseminated per the Advocacy and Dissemination Plan developed at the onset of the evaluation and be made available to a wider-public on UNICEF web-site and unicef.org as well as the website of the Ministry of Education.

Reporting Requirements:

The evaluation will be managed by the Child Rights Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist who will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the evaluation and for the management of the evaluation budget. The evaluation manager will ensure the quality and independence of the evaluation and guarantee its alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines and other relevant procedures, provide quality assurance on the relevance of the evaluation findings and conclusions, and the implement ability of recommendations, and contribute to the dissemination of the evaluation findings and follow-up on the management response. The evaluation manager will work in collaboration

⁸ Available at http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_Eval_Report_Standards.pdf

with relevant Sections and the Deputy Representative of the UNICEF Serbia CO. Additional quality assurance will be provided by the Regional Evaluation Adviser and Regional Evaluation Specialist, as needed. The Final Report will need to be rated as satisfactory by UNICEF's external quality assurance facility and will be approved by the Ministry of Education and the UNICEF Representative in Serbia.

Evaluation reference group:

As per the UNICEF evaluation policy an Evaluation Reference Group will be established to act as an advisory and provide inputs on all main evaluation deliverables. The ERG is expected to provide feedback during the evaluation process and on the deliverables; comment on the evaluation approach and methods and facilitate access to data and information. Representatives of the evaluation reference group will participate in elaboration of recommendations through active contribution during debriefing meetings and by providing feedback to the draft inception and final reports.

Structure of evaluation report

The Final Report must be compliant with UNICEF evaluation report standards and shall include the following:

- Title page and opening pages
- Executive summary (4-6 page stand-alone document, concise and well-formulated)
- Description of the object of the evaluation
- Rationale and purpose of the evaluation
- Evaluation scope, objectives and key questions
- The evaluation design and methodology
- The stakeholders' participation
- Ethical issues
- Findings
- Constraints
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Lessons learned
- Annexes

The evaluation report will be assessed and rated against an assessment tool to be made available to the winning applicants.

Methodology:

The evaluation will involve duty bearers and stakeholders in all stages, in accordance with a participatory approach. To the extent possible, the evaluation may include rights holders (e.g. parents of pre-school children).

A preliminary evaluability self-assessment revealed availability of a number of government normative and strategic analytical documents. Data provided by national sources (e.g. Statistical Office) is deemed reliable. The evaluation team may also make use of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

The following sources of information have been identified, whereas more detailed and specific materials will be provided starting from the evaluation inception phase.

Initial list of key documents:

- Strategy of development of education in Serbia 2020;
- Ex-post analysis of the implementation of the Strategy of education in Serbia 2020;
- Strategy of development of education and upbringing in Serbia 2030 (and accompanying Action Plan 2021-2023)
- Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025;
- Law on foundations of the system of education and upbringing;
- Law on preschool upbringing and education;
- Law on local self-government;
- Law on public-private partnership;
- Law on financial support for families with children.

For evaluating the domain of the PSE network, it is recommended that the evaluation team explores the availability of data with LSGs that adopt an act on the network of public preschool institutions on their territory and local action plans for their planning and management at the level of the local community, within the Education Information System for current data, the report on pre-schools compiled as part of the Inclusive Preschool education project of the Ministry of Education (Component 1) in preparation for network expansion or reports from IPA projects IPA and IMPRES. Individual preschool institutions can also be a source of data. Alternative sources/reports for earlier data may also be considered, as well as demographic trends that are available with the Statistical Office (e.g. DevInfo database). The MoESTD Handbook on Optimization of the Network is also recommended.

For evaluating PSE coverage and equity, it is recommended that the evaluation team explores Statistical Office and MICS data. Additional data of children from vulnerable groups may be available through the Registry of Children with Disability, LSG Departments for Social Affairs, local Intersectoral Committees, Developmental Counselling Units, Republic IPH etc. although these sources may not be available in all municipalities, or the availability of data may be sporadic. The National report on inclusive education is also available.

For evaluating PSE quality, it is recommended to take into consideration new self-evaluation reports of pre-schools (to be available in May/June 2023), the endline report of external evaluation on a representative stratified sample (25 pre-schools) that are part of the monitoring of advancement of quality of preschool through the project Inclusive preschool education of the Ministry of Education, data available from the monitoring framework of the programme of support to capacity building of professionals in preschool (Component 2 of the project Inclusive preschool education of the Ministry of Education) etc.

A more in-depth evaluability assessment will be conducted by the evaluation team at the inception phase to further inform evaluation methodology. A specific methodology will be developed by the evaluation team and may include desk review/analysis, key informant interviews, observations and field visits.

The team will verify the evaluability and devise strategies for how to manage possible data limitations. The evaluation team may find that disaggregation of data, at times, is limited, and baseline data unavailable, which may influence assessment of changes. Mitigation strategies should be put in place for such instances.

Methodological rigor will be given significant consideration in the assessment of the proposals. Hence, consultants are invited to interrogate the approach and methodology suggested in the ToR and improve on it, or propose an approach they deem more appropriate, which should be guided by the UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy (2018),⁹ the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (2016),¹⁰ UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis (2015)¹¹ and UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards (2017).¹² Moreover, the evaluation should consider throughout the issues of equity, gender equality and human rights. In their proposal, consultants should clearly refer to triangulation, sampling plan and methodological limitations and mitigation measures. They are encouraged to also demonstrate, wherever possible, methodological expertise in governance and public finance areas, following human rights-based approach and gender-responsiveness.

It is expected that the evaluation will employ a theory-based approach (by using the ToC reconstructed at the inception phase) and apply mixed methods, drawing on key background documents, monitoring framework, and primary data that should be generated through key informant interviews (KIIs).

All key documents, as noted above, together with a contact list of all relevant informants will be provided to the evaluators once a contractual agreement has been made.

⁹ UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy: https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2018-14-Revised_EvalODS-EN.pdf

¹⁰ UNEG Norms: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>, UNEG Standards: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

¹¹ Available at https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF

¹² Available at [https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_adapted_reporting_standards_updated_June_2017_FINAL\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_adapted_reporting_standards_updated_June_2017_FINAL(1).pdf)

At a minimum, the evaluation will draw on the following methods:

- **Desk review** of background documents, literature and other relevant data, including analysis of secondary quantitative data, review of material on the environment, and recent plans, strategies and reports;
- **Key informant interviews** with Government, UNICEF CO, donors, implementation partners, communities, and other stakeholders;
- **Observations and field visits** for direct exposure to the implementation of the reform, collection of beneficiaries' and partners' feedback and evidence needed to respond to some evaluation questions.

Sampling of key informant interviews and field sites will be determined during the inception phase, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education and UNICEF.

During the field mission phase, the team will be expected to visit selected sites and conduct primary data gathering. Sites will be selected during the inception phase based on criteria developed by the evaluation team in collaborating with the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education, UNICEF and other partners.

There are several **limitations** to the evaluation which can hinder the process, including but not limited to:

- As already noted, the reforms which are the object of this evaluation were not articulated in a formal Theory of Change, but emerged from the strategic framework set out by the Government. The evaluation team will need to reconstruct the Theory of Change, based on available documentation and consultations with stakeholders.
- Interviews with stakeholders will depend on their availability. Due to a considerable number of sites, it will not be feasible to visit all of them. The evaluation sampling plan will explore mitigation of these and other related potential limitations;

The evaluation should include the following steps:

Step 1: Desk review of relevant background documents and literature search. The evaluators will review key background documents to understand the reform and carry out literature search of secondary data to understand the context in which it transpired.

Step 2: Inception Mission. Upon the desk review, an inception mission to Serbia will be organized for the evaluation team. The inception mission will aim to introduce the evaluation to important stakeholders, including UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education, members of the Evaluation Reference Group with the objective to establish a common vision for the evaluation.

Step 3: Preparation of Inception Report (IR) that includes in-depth evaluability assessment that should, among other, specifically propose the evaluation methodology, tools and protocols. The methodology should be prepared to cover all the intended objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation methodology design will be finalized in agreement with the Reference Group (see below), the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education, UNICEF and the Inception Report should be prepared based on the Evaluation Norms and Standards of UNEG and submitted to the evaluation manager for approval.

Step 4: Data collection. The application of mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) is expected, which should be human-, and including child rights - based, and equity- and gender sensitive, as noted above. The evaluators will seek to collect, use and report disaggregated data wherever possible, and conduct interviews in a manner that encourages active and equal participation of rights holders vis-à-vis duty bearers, among other.

Step 5: Data analysis. Collected data should be analyzed by using relevant analysis methods that should be clearly described in the inception report. All reported data will be disaggregated wherever possible and gender overview of interviewed persons will be provided.

Step 6: Sharing preliminary findings. The evaluators will share preliminary findings with the Reference Group, the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education and UNICEF CO. While feedback will be taken into consideration and incorporated into the draft report, the consultants are encouraged to guard against validity threats, such as personal bias.

Step 7: Draft report. The consultants will prepare a draft report, with conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations drawn from the data. The report structure should follow UNICEF's evaluation report guidance.

Step 8: Finalization of the evaluation report. The consultants will present the final draft evaluation conclusions and recommendations to the Reference Group, the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education UNICEF and other key stakeholders, using a Power Point Presentation and/or other methodologies for presenting in a participatory manner and in an accessible language form, if needed. Recommendations of the evaluation should also be presented, prioritized, and grouped according to stakeholder groups. Comments and feedback on findings and recommendations should be incorporated to finalize the report, as appropriate.

Good practices not covered therein are also to be followed. Any sensitive issues or concerns should be raised with the evaluation manager (CRM/E Specialist in the CO) as soon as they are identified.

A quality assurance (QA) review in line with UNICEF Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Research Studies and Evaluations (RSEs) will be applied to both Inception Report and Final Draft Report. The QA is performed by the Country Office, using an external review facility.

Ethical guidance to evaluation

The evaluation should be conducted in strict adherence with UNEG ethical guidelines and code of conduct. The evaluation team will also sign a non-disclosure agreement. The team should identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal. All evaluation deliverables will be subject to ethical approvals through an external review facility assigned by UNICEF.

Special measures will be put in place to ensure that the evaluation process is ethical and that the participants in the evaluation process can openly express their opinion. The sources of information will be protected, and known only to the evaluators.

Specific attention should be paid to issues specifically relating to:

- harm and benefits;
- informed consent;
- privacy and confidentiality; and
- conflict of interest of the evaluation informants.

Consequently, the consultants have to ensure that it is clear to all subjects that their participation in the evaluation is voluntary. All participants should be informed or advised of the context and purpose of the evaluation, as well as the privacy and confidentiality of the discussions.

Timing/duration of contract:

A tentative timeframe for the evaluation is presented below.

DATES (tentative)	TASKS AND DELIVERABLES	RESPONSIBLE STAFF
January-February 2023	ToR finalization; compilation of document database; advocacy and dissemination plan. Tendering for the evaluation	Evaluation Manager
March (<i>evaluation team contracted</i>)	Background reading and desk review	Evaluation Team with support by Evaluation Manager
	Inception mission plan, including data collection tools; Outline of Inception Report	Evaluation Team; Evaluation Manager to assist inception phase
April	Inception mission to Serbia, including meetings with	Evaluation team leader;

	stakeholders and Reference Group;	Evaluation Manager and CO to assist with inception mission preparations
20 April	Submission of draft Inception report	Evaluation Team
30 April	Review and comment on draft Inception report; Submission of final Inception Report; Ethical review (if any)	Evaluation Manager; Reference Group; Evaluation Team
May	Data collection mission to Serbia and debriefing;	Evaluation Team; Evaluation Manager and CO to assist with field mission
15 June	Data analysis and Draft Evaluation report submission	Evaluation Team
15 July	Review and comment on the draft Evaluation report	Evaluation Manager;
30 July	Comments addressed; Finalization of Evaluation Report and Evaluation Briefs	Evaluation Team
September	Management response preparation; dissemination	CO Senior Management; Evaluation Manager

The evaluation team may propose a realistic timeline for the implementation of tasks and deliverables, although the end date is non-negotiable.

Terms of payment:

The contractual fee may be reduced if the assignments/deliverables are not fulfilled to the required standard. In a case of serious dissatisfaction with the company's performance the contract may be terminated in line with UNICEF procedures and as spelled out in the contract.

All payment terms will be indicated in the institutional contract upon selection of the successful company:

- Approved Inception Report: 25% of the contractual amount;
- Approved initial evaluation findings report: 30% of the contractual amount;
- Approved final report, final presentation and other materials: 45%.

All applications will be treated with strict confidentiality. UNICEF is an equal opportunity employer.

Nature of Penalty Clause in Contract

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines (fees reduced due to late submission: 20 days - 10%; 1 month - 20%; 2 months -30%; more 2 months – payment withhold). All materials developed will remain the copyright of UNICEF and UNICEF will be free to adapt and modify them in the future.

The bidders are requested to provide an all-inclusive cost in the financial proposal. In all cost implications bidders should factor the cost of the required service/assignment. Estimated cost for travel should be included in the financial proposal. Travel cost shall be calculated based on economy class travel, regardless of the length of travel. Costs for accommodation,

meals and incidentals shall not exceed applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as promulgated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Unexpected travels shall also be treated as above.

Qualifications/specialized knowledge/experience required to complete the task:

Team Composition and Qualifications

The evaluation will be carried out by a team of 3 consultants (including the Team Leader and at least one national of Serbia), all to be recruited by an institutional contractor, who should have substantive expertise in leading and conducting evaluations and should not have any conflict of interest with respect to UNICEF.

The evaluation team will have combined knowledge and expertise in the following areas:

- Pre-school education
- Pre-school education reform in high and upper-middle income countries
- Governance in education
- Child rights, gender equality, human rights.

Companies responding to the RFP should plan to hire interpreters and consultants for support in interpretation, organization of the in-country agenda, and interpretation of findings from a country-specific stand point if needed.

As a general guide, the level of effort and duration of the evaluation suggest that the Team Leader should be allocated a total of 50 days and all team members should be allocated up to 30 days (depending on the distribution of work and missions across the team).

The evaluation will have to be conducted by a gender-balanced team covering the below requirements:

- Team-leader with documented extensive experience (at least 8 full years) in conducting development evaluations (having conducted evaluations for UNICEF is an asset, having evaluations positively rated by UNICEF's quality assurance system is an additional asset);
- At least two team members with proven expertise in one or more of the following areas: pre-school education, pre-school education reform in high and upper-middle income countries (prior experience in Western Balkans is an asset), governance in education;
- At least two team members with proven extensive experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis;
- At least one team member with solid knowledge on child rights, HRBA and gender equality;
- Excellent report writing skills in English;
- Good communication skills
- Fluency in English, fluency in Serbian is an asset.

The consultants must remain in strict adherence with UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities for the evaluation team leader and team members:

The team leader will be responsible for managing and leading the evaluation team, designing the evaluation methodology, developing tools, data collection, analyzing data, conducting debriefing sessions and recommendations workshop, drafting the inception and the final reports with recommendations, guiding other team members, and presenting the final report.

Specific tasks for the team leader include the following:

- guide the desk review including all relevant programme and project documents and reports, previous studies and research and evaluations;

- develop and provide methodological guidance for the team with regard to the tool development and define overall direction for data analysis and quality assurance;
- provide guidance on the preparation of evaluation deliverables;
- manage the evaluation workplan;
- maintain coordination and communication with the other team members and UNICEF staff involved in the evaluation;
- review all relevant to the evaluation documents;
- lead the planning and conduct analysis and discussion on the evaluation questions and issues common to the team and the process;
- undertake the data gathering mission and present the evaluation findings to CO, the Ministry of Education, Management Unit for the project Inclusive preschool education, ERG and the evaluation manager;

Common tasks and duties for all team members:

- all team members are requested to familiarize themselves with UNICEF global normative products in the substantive areas for which they are responsible. these are available on www.unicef.org;
- all team members will contribute to the evaluation deliverables – inception report, final report and power point presentation;
- all team members should participate in the field mission(s);
- the national team member will support the team leader in evaluation design, data collection and analysis, debriefing sessions and recommendations workshop, and drafting parts of inception and final reports, and translation of documents from Serbian to English and vice versa, where needed.

Role of UNICEF Serbia country office:

The evaluation manager is responsible for:

- Endorsing the ToRs;
- Establishing and updating the electronic library of documents for the evaluation;
- Collecting and summarizing all feedback received throughout the main stages of the evaluation;
- Conducting the Quality assurance as per the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Research, Studies and Evaluations (RSEs);
- Ensuring Ethical standards and requirements are fully met as per UNICEF Evaluation Policy and SOPs for RSEs;
- Supporting participation of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process;
- Establishment of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and arrangement of its meetings;
- Ensure ERG members and other key stakeholders are consulted and comment on the evaluation main deliverables;
- Engaging Communications colleagues in the development of Advocacy and Dissemination plan for the uptake of evaluation findings;
- Support the development of management response for the evaluation.

Roles and Responsibilities of Sections of UNICEF CO:

- Provide access to information, data and evidence on UNICEF activities;
- Identify and facilitate the access of the evaluation team to key stakeholders;
- Support development of management response;
- Promote use of evaluation findings.

Selection criteria:

The evaluation and award criteria that will be used for this RFP is Cumulative Analysis evaluation (point system with weight attribution). The weighting ratio between the technical and financial proposals will be 70:30. The respective importance between technical and financial scores will be weighted as 70% and 30%.

An offer is considered technically acceptable (and therefore eligible for opening of financial offers) when it obtains 49 points out of 70 during the course of the technical evaluation. The final selection of the contractor will be based on a combination of the technical and financial proposals with a weighting of 70% for the technical proposal and 30% for the

financial proposal. In the case of cumulative analysis, the proposals scoring below 70% of the available technical points will be considered non-compliant and will be rejected and not further considered (e.g. in the case of 70:30, the passing score is 49 points out of 70).

- Weightage for Technical Proposal = 70%
- Weightage for Financial Proposal = 30%
- Total Score = 100%

A) The technical proposal (70 points) should include the following information:

- Cover letter
- Presentation of the firm/research institution/consulting group and experiences
- Understanding of the ToRs and Evaluation needs
- Team composition (incl. identification of Team Leader and a manager), with complete CVs (Annex 4 lists the key requirements for Team Leader)
- Matching the team skills with the required skills
- Proposed methodology and rationale for it
- Detailed Timeline/Chronogram and level of effort by Team Leader and manager
- Sample(s) or link(s) of previous Evaluation(s) by the team members

B) The following documents should be included in the technical proposals of the bidders:

- a) A complete copy of your latest audited financial statements with comparative figures for the last 2 years, preferably signed by your company's accounting firm/ certified external auditor. The financial statements are to include, but not limited to, the following:
 1. Balance sheet (mandatory)
 2. Income statement/ Profit and Loss Statement (mandatory)
 3. Statement of cash flows (if available)
 4. Statement of changes in shareholders' equity (if available)
 5. The report from the external auditor (if available)
 6. Notes to the financial statements (if available)
- b) A copy of your company's certificate of legal registration (mandatory)
- c) A copy of your Official list of authorized signatures (mandatory)
- d) Your company's UN Global Marketplace (UNGM) registration number (recommended). You are kindly requested to register for, at the very latest, Basic and Level 1 stages. For registration and instructions on how to, kindly refer to the attachment or the UNGM site: www.ungm.org/RegistrationProcess

The technical proposal will be assessed with the following criteria:

TABLE - TECHNICAL CRITERIA

Technical sub-criteria	Description	Maximum Points
Completeness of technical requirements (5 points)	Overall conformity of the proposal, including appropriate referencing and supporting documents (description of institution and key personnel, understanding of ToRs, matching team skills with required skills, proposed methodology, detailed timeline, references and written sample)	5
Qualifications of team (20 points)	Overall conformity with requirement of the Team leader	20
	Overall conformity with requirement of international experts	
	Overall conformity with requirement of national experts	
Quality of technical proposal (45 points)	Understanding of the ToRs (match between the proposed approach and requested scope of evaluation)	4
	Quality of the methodology and methods proposed	35
	Realistic work plan and level of efforts of team	2

	Understanding of ethical considerations and integration of such in the methodology	4
Maximum Score for technical criteria		70
Minimum Score for technical compliance		49

Total Maximum points for the technical proposal is **70** points. Only proposals which receive a minimum of **49** points will be considered further.

Separately, a **financial proposal** should be as detailed as possible, and it is recommended that the proposal be broken down by the number of days worked by each team member and the daily rate of each member, travel costs, per diem, insurance, and administrative and operational costs, etc. A Template will be provided.

B) **Financial Proposal** should include:

1. Detailed budget as per the Financial Proposal template
2. Explanation of budget assumptions with regard to planning, team composition, field work, etc.

The total amount of points allocated for the price component is **30**. The maximum number of points will be allotted to the lowest price proposal that is opened and compared among those invited firms/institutions which obtain the threshold points in the evaluation of the technical component. All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price; e.g.:

Score for price proposal X = (Max. score for price proposal (**30** Points) * Price of lowest priced proposal) / Price of proposal X

Total obtainable Technical and Price score: **100**

All interested institutions are requested to include in their submission detailed costs including:

- a) Daily rate including hours per day
- b) Expenses associated with data collection, translation etc. Please include all relevant costs that are required for this exercise) to be agreed prior to commencing project
- c) Any additional requirements needed to complete the evaluation or that might have an impact on cost or delivery of product
- d) The evaluators would be required to use their own computers, printers, photocopier etc.

The request for services under the evaluation contract will require prospective companies to indicate their financial offer for the services to be provided (inclusive of fees (travel and accommodation costs, where relevant). As part of the selection process, the office will select the company that quotes the lowest fee from the list of prospective companies who are deemed suitable for achieving all the tasks on time and as per the criteria and deliverables stipulated in the terms of reference.

Supervisor : Child Rights Monitoring Specialist

Request Prepared by:

Ana Prodanovic

Child Rights Monitoring Specialist

Date:

Request Reviewed by:

Yosi Echeverry Burckhardt

Deputy Representative

Date:

Approved by:

Deyana Kostadinova

Representative

Date: