**Terms of Reference**

**UNICEF in Tajikistan**

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| Project title: | Technical support to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan to implement the national plan for preschool education within the framework of the Medium-Term Action Plan for Education for 2021-2023, using the BELDS scaling tools under KIX GPE project. |
| Service title: | Assessment of the traditional/state model for the provision of preschool education and care services in Dushanbe to develop a scenario and recommendations for the efficient use of financial resources and rational use of premises. |
| Duration: | 15 working days (from January 17 to February 4, 2022) |

**Background and rationale**

UNICEF Tajikistan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, continues to promote a program to expand early childhood education services using a variety of models, including low-cost early childhood education centers (ECCs). Pre-school enrollment in Tajikistan is 15.9% for children aged 3 to 6 and remains the lowest in the Central Asia region. More than 84% of children between the ages of 3 and 6 begin primary school without basic pre-primary education. The preschool education system offers a limited amount of preschool educational services in public, alternative and private institutions, which remain critically dependent on external funding.

State allocations for pre-primary education remain insufficient and makes only 7 percent of the total education budget, 1.7% of the state budget and 0.42% of GDP (EMIS, 2020-2021), which amounts to TJS 396.3 million, which shows an increase by 24% compared to the 2019-2020 academic year and allows to support 678 preschool educational institutions, in which 97164 children receive ECE experience. Given the high birth rate and dependence on external funding, achieving the national goal of increasing preschool enrollment for children aged 3 to 6 remains a challenge. In addition, the current threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on a significant increase in government spending for the early childhood education subsector, requiring immediate action and the development of alternative funding models and financial sources to minimize the early childhood education budget deficit in the coming years.

**Objective**

In order to strengthen the efficiency of financing of preschool education subsector, including private and public sources, as well as to improve the per capita financing mechanism in the preschool education system, Tajikistan was selected as one of the pilot countries under the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) program to model an innovative and consultative approach to strengthening national planning capacity; budgeting and financing of the early childhood education subsector; and expanding and building the capacity of national education systems to effectively deliver early childhood education programs.

To this end, UNICEF and its implementing partner the “Economics and Education” NGO, are working closely with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan to analyze and assess the costs of existing traditional (state) and alternative models of preschool education in order to develop scenarios and recommendations for effective use of financial resources and rational use of space and premises in preschool educational institutions to increase capacity of preschool sub-sector to admit more children with existing infrastructure and finances. Further results of this analysis will be used to develop collaborative messages for the policy and decision makers to facilitate a dialogue of rational prioritization of decisions about spending on preschool education.

UNICEF Tajikistan sent an official letter to the General Directorate of Education in Dushanbe with a request to provide technical advice and appoint preschool and finance experts to support the process of carrying out this analysis in two preschool educational facilities in Dushanbe with 150-200 children in average per facility.

**Scope of work**

The technical working group under this assignment will convene technical working meetings with key staff of two preschool educational institutions, which will be identified and proposed by the General Directorate of Education of Dushanbe, to understand the situation on the ground. The meetings will be conducted based on pre-developed questionnaire aiming to collect data on finances, staffing capacity and rational use of facility premises. The members of the technical working group will develop a list of respondents from the key staff of the preschool educational institution and prepare a schedule of meetings, which will be previously sent to the preschool educational institution for approval.

During the process of the current assignment, the technical group will prepare a general overview of the situation in the preschool educational institution, taking into account the following areas:

- The total actual annual budget of the preschool educational institution at the end of 2021. It is necessary to provide a breakdown by special account and checking account and parental contributions.

- Total number of children with a breakdown: a) age, b) group (nursery, junior, senior), c) gender, d) employment status of parents of children of the 6-year-old group (one or both parents are employed)

- Total number of full-time and part-time staff with a breakdown: a) position, b) form of employment agreement (full-time staff or on a contract basis).

- The total area of ​​the kindergarten, including the premises and the courtyard with a plan of all floors and the names of each individual room of the preschool educational institution, including a kitchen, a conference hallб sleeping room, etc.)

- The total number of hours of use of each individual room during the day.

- General meals menu of the preschool educational institution and food costs per month, season and year.

- General expenses for utilities (separately for the kitchen) per month, season, year.

- Additional services on a contract basis and its cost

- The general picture of taxation of preschool educational institutions

- Is there a waiting list in the preschool educational institution for the enrollment of children who could not get in in September.

- Difficulties in the implementation of Per-Capita Financing

- Opportunities and experience in working with the private sector.

Кespondents:

- Director of the preschool facility

- Accountant of preschool facility

- Finance specialist of preschool facility

The objectives of this analysis include:

1. Prepare an overview of the current traditional model of preschool education, taking into account the above listed indicators.

2. Determine the opportunities and difficulties for the implementation and modification of the use of the preschool facility’s premises, as well as develop proposals for staffing policy and the efficiency of financing of specific types of services of the institution.

3. Prepare a scenario and recommendations for a modified type of preschool educational institution, taking into account the revised costing in the context of the country capacity.

This analysis will prepare evidence and calculation for establishing an effective system of financing and costs, as well as open a dialogue on a possible change and reform in the approach to the use of premises and space of the institution. The results of this analysis will be shared with key stakeholders in education to form a common understanding and decision-making on the reform of traditional models.

The final product of this analysis will include a report that will present the results and recommendations of the analysis.

**Ethical considerations**

The technical team will be guided by basic human rights principles in the analysis process and must adhere to ethical standards of corporate social responsibility during data collection, taking into account the privacy and confidentiality of respondents, taking into account the educational needs of all children, including the most marginalized (children with disabilities , ethnic minorities, refugees).