

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Investing in Teachers' Continuous Professional Development, Improving Learning For All Children

CONTRACT MODALITY Individual Consultancy

DUTY STATION Amman/ Remote

DURATION OF CONTRACT 4 Months and 25 Days

Purpose of Assignment

The fundamental mission of UNICEF is to promote the rights of every child, everywhere, in everything the organization does — in programmes, in advocacy and in operations. The equity strategy, emphasizing the most disadvantaged and excluded children and families, translates this commitment to children's rights into action. For UNICEF, equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favoritism. To the degree that any child has an unequal chance in life — in its social, political, economic, civic and cultural dimensions — her or his rights are violated. There is growing evidence that investing in the health, education and protection of a society's most disadvantaged citizens — addressing inequity — not only will give all children the opportunity to fulfill their potential but also will lead to sustained growth and stability of countries. This is why the focus on equity is so vital. It accelerates progress towards realizing the human rights of all children, which is the universal mandate of UNICEF, as outlined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while also supporting the equitable development of nations.

UNICEF's Education Programme supports countries to deliver equitable, inclusive, and high-quality learning for all children and adolescents, in line with the UNICEF Education Strategy 2026-2029 Shaping the Future of Learning and the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2026–2029. Central to this agenda is the transformation of teacher and workforce systems as a core driver of education quality, resilience, and equity.

Education Centers of Excellence (CoEs) provide predictive, integrated, and trackable technical assistance to countries. The Education Global Practice, embedded across four COEs, supports education system reform across the learning lifecycle, from school readiness to foundational learning, to skills for life and work. Teacher Development and Workforce (TDAW), the pillar with which this consultancy is aligned, is recognized as one of the most critical leverage points for achieving and accelerating improved learning outcomes and strengthening system resilience, particularly in fragile, crisis, and humanitarian settings.

Focus of Consultancy: Investing in Teachers' Continuous Professional Development, Improving Learning for All Children

Given the constrained fiscal environments in which UNICEF and Ministries of Education currently operate, UNICEF wants to understand which investments in teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) offer the greatest potential to improve equitable learning outcomes, for which learners and teachers, under what conditions, and at what cost? Additionally, to inform UNICEF's global TDAW research agenda, this exploratory consultancy will help update what UNICEF still needs to know at the global- and country-level regarding the contributions of teacher development and workforce reform to all children's learning outcomes.

Background: Teachers' work and children's learning across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus

UNICEF's mandate to protect children's rights includes access to education and the quality and relevance of classroom learning for all children. Despite significant progress in past decades, however, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report estimates that 273 million children, adolescents and youth remain out of school. It

is also clear that access to education does not equate to learning: the 2022 UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank report on The State of Global Learning Poverty shows that 70 per cent of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read and understand a simple text. In response, the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP) evidence synthesis identifies the most cost-effective interventions available to policymakers. Its ‘Smart Buys’ and ‘Best Buys’ classifications rank teacher-facing interventions, structured pedagogy paired with teacher training, and instruction targeted to a learner’s actual learning level among the most cost-effective means of improving learning at scale. Moreover, strengthening the teaching workforce is identified as a central lever for addressing the global learning crisis.

This learning-focused advocacy is complemented by recent high-level attention on the state and status of the teaching profession. The UN Transforming Education Summit placed teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession among its core action tracks, recognizing that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's learning losses require investments in a qualified, motivated, and well-supported teaching workforce. This outcome gave rise to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, which called for investment in continuous teacher professional development, safe working conditions, and the inclusion of teachers’ voices in policymaking. These principles were extended to forced-displacement settings through the Global Refugee Forum, where multi-stakeholder pledges committed states and partners to integrate refugee teachers into national systems and open certification and professional development pathways to those working in crisis contexts. Most recently, The Santiago Consensus, adopted at the UNESCO World Summit on Teachers (2025), presents a shared global framework for teacher policy and financing, explicitly linking investments in teachers to closing enrolment gaps and reversing the learning crisis.

These commitments, while promising, are up against a profession in crisis with protracted consequences for children's equitable access to quality teaching and their learning outcomes. UNESCO's 2024 Global Report on Teachers projects a shortfall of 44 million primary and secondary teachers by 2030. And as Education International identifies, recruitment, retention, and attrition challenges are shaped by inadequate pay, heavy workloads, poor access to relevant professional development, and resulting wellbeing challenges.

The Education Commission identifies teacher quality as the single most influential school-level factor in student outcomes. And while numerous actors have undertaken wide-ranging teacher investment case studies, the sector still lacks a comprehensive, systematic, and representative investment case for teacher continuous professional development that covers the diversity of teacher typologies and country contexts. As such, this consultancy provides UNICEF with the opportunity to shape internal understandings of how investments in teachers and how public expenditure on teacher continuous professional development contributes to more equitable learning outcomes for all children.

The opportunity: Investing in Teachers’ Continuous Professional Development, Improving Learning for All Children

The abovementioned pressures are compounded by the fact that international external funding for education in developing and emergency contexts has reduced significantly in recent years. UNICEF and OECD data show ODA for education falling by over a quarter between 2023 and 2026, with education in emergencies funding cuts of 20 per cent or more in many settings. Education Cannot Wait also reports that less than 30 per cent of humanitarian education appeal targets have been met. Bridging such funding shortfalls, supporting teachers’ needs and addressing the learning crisis require the protection of existing development assistance and humanitarian aid while identifying and mobilising innovative and blended finance mechanisms.

In a majority of low- and middle-income countries, teacher salaries account for between 70 to 90 percent of public education expenditure. In constrained fiscal environments, the remaining 10 to 30 percent of expenditure is allocated to school infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, and teacher development. For this consultancy, UNICEF is interested in understanding which types of investments in teacher continuous professional development, in which contexts, and for whom, are most likely to improve equitable access to quality education and learning outcomes for all children.

Investment in teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) represents a critical policy and financing question. The challenge is no longer simply whether to invest in teacher professional development, but which forms of CPD, for which teachers, under which conditions, and at what level of investment are most likely to improve teaching practice and produce equitable improvements in learning outcomes for all learners no matter where they are.

To achieve this, an exploratory investment case for teachers' continuous professional development is needed. This consultancy will develop a robust methodology for determining which investments in teacher continuous professional development offer the highest returns in terms of improved and more equitable learning outcomes for all children.

This contract

This consultancy will develop a foundational and exploratory investment case for teacher CPD, assessing the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, equity, scalability and sustainability of different approaches to developing practicing teachers. The analysis will consider different models of CPD, including structured professional development, coaching and mentoring, school- and cluster-based professional learning, professional learning communities, and technology supported approaches, where sufficient evidence exists to assess their contribution to improved teaching and learning.

Equity will be central to the investment case. The analysis should examine not only average effects on learning, but also the extent to which different CPD investments reach teachers serving learners experiencing the greatest educational disadvantage and contribute to narrowing disparities in learning outcomes, including in rural, remote, low-resource, fragile, crisis-affected, and displacement contexts.

The investment case will therefore seek to establish a robust analytical framework for understanding where and how scarce resources for teachers' CPD can generate the greatest and most equitable returns for children's learning.

While CPD will provide the principal focus, the analysis will locate professional development within the wider teacher workforce system, recognizing that its effectiveness may be influenced by teacher supply, deployment, working conditions, leadership, motivation, system capacity and financing. CPD should therefore not be examined as a substitute for wider teacher workforce reform, but as one critical investment lever within it.

Two levels of work are envisioned in terms of audience and strategic value. Applicants are expected to address these two levels in their technical proposals, furnishing how their specific experience and proposed methodological approaches can help UNICEF achieve the desired outcomes stated below.

1. Investment analysis and institutional decision-making: The first level will provide UNICEF with a stronger evidence base for decisions concerning investment in teacher CPD. It will synthesize evidence on what works, for whom, under which circumstances and at what cost. As an output, a draft framework for comparing CPD investments based on their potential contribution to equitable improvements in learning will be presented. The analysis should move beyond identifying 'promising practices' to consider the strength of evidence, the teacher and context typologies for which different approaches are implemented, the costs, and scalability of different approaches.

2. Building UNICEF's longer-term research agenda: The second level will use the investment analysis to identify critical gaps in the global evidence base and translate these into priority questions for UNICEF's Teacher Development and Workforce Global Research Agenda.

Guiding question

The first internal and strategic level of work is informed by the fact that reduced external and domestic funding for education across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus forces policy makers and programme designers

to find greater efficiencies, for example by prioritizing children's learning via more focused investments in teacher continuous professional development. In which case UNICEF needs to consider how to position and articulate 'teachers' as a core area of research, advocacy, and investment. This level seeks to understand the following question: Which investments in teachers' continuous professional development are most likely to contribute to equitable improvements in learning outcomes, for which teachers and learners, in which contexts, and at what cost?

Possible supporting questions:

a. Effectiveness and learning

- Which approaches to teacher CPD demonstrate evidence of improving learner outcomes?

b. Equity

- Which CPD approaches reach and benefit teachers serving learners experiencing the greatest educational

disadvantage?

- To what extent do different CPD investments contribute to reducing disparities in learning outcomes?
- How do results differ across contexts, teacher groups and learner populations where disaggregated evidence

is available?

c. Cost-effectiveness

- Which investments appear capable of achieving meaningful improvements in learning at an affordable cost and at scale?

d. Scalability

- Which CPD approaches demonstrate potential for sustainable implementation at scale?
- How do wider teacher workforce factors, including deployment, workload, leadership and working conditions, influence the return on investment in CPD?

e. Research gaps and UNICEF's research agenda

- Which significant gaps remain concerning equity, costs, scale and learning outcomes?
- Which research questions should UNICEF prioritize through subsequent global and country-level research?

Expected consultancy outcomes

- UNICEF has a rigorous, evidence-informed and foundational investment case identifying which approaches to teacher CPD show the greatest potential to improve learning outcomes equitably and cost-effectively.
- UNICEF has an analytical framework for comparing CPD investment options according to learning impact, equity, cost-effectiveness, reach, scalability and sustainability.

- UNICEF has an identified and prioritized set of evidence gaps and research questions to inform the next phase of the Teacher Development and Workforce Global Research Agenda.

Expected deliverables

The two above-stated levels of work will be delivered via a series of specific deliverables. Suggested products will

include:

1. Inception report
2. Brief literature review
3. Methodological framework
4. 'Investing in Teacher Continuous Professional Development, Improving Learning for All Children' report

Information for the successful applicant

Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

The selected candidate is solely responsible for ensuring that the visa (applicable) and health insurance required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract. Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)- endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.

UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

Scope of Work

Addressing the objectives of this consultancy, applicants should submit a financial and technical proposal inclusive of a timeline and costed milestones representing the scope of work and suggested allocation of consultancy days outlined below.

1. Inception report (2 days)

- Overview of the consultancy’s aims and expected outcomes
- A Gantt chart (timeline) for each of the deliverables outlined below
- A brief risk assessment
- Costed milestones

2. Systematic literature review covering the core thematic areas of focus (7 days)

- The extent to which investment cases for teachers have been carried out
- The methods used in existing studies and the effect to which they are used
- The extent to which studies on teacher CPD modalities and contributions to children's learning outcomes have been undertaken

3. Methodological framework (4 days)

- Clear working definition of the 'Investing in Teachers, Investing in Learning for All Children' scope for the core theme of continuous professional development
- Brief evaluation of appropriate investment case methods for the core themes.
- Rationale for the selection of investment case method for the theme.
- Methodological limitations and recommendations for a common UNICEF 'Investing in Teachers, Investing in Learning for All Children' approach.

4. Consultative research, data analysis, and econometric modelling (15 days)

- Access and analyze relevant international and national datasets concerning teacher professional development, education expenditure, teacher characteristics and learning outcomes where available.
- Undertake economic and cost-effectiveness analysis.
- Examine variation in results across contexts and population groups wherever the evidence permits.
- Consult external experts in teacher continuing professional development, learning, equity, education financing, and public expenditure.
- Consult relevant UNICEF country office and partner experts.
- Identify contextual and system conditions associated with successful CPD investment.

5. Report writing, editing, and publishing (10 days)

- Draft the literature review, methodological framework, and final report.
- Review and revise report based on UNICEF feedback.

6. General administration and project management (2 days)

- Meetings with UNICEF
- Invoicing and general milestone reporting.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
Internal-facing deliverables	Deliverable 1 – 1. Inception report 2. Systematic literature review 3. Methodological framework 4. Consultative research, data analysis, and econometric modelling	09 Nov 2026 (2 Days) 20 Nov 2026 (7 Days) 30 Nov 2026 (4 Days) 30 Jan 2027 (15 Days)

	5. Investment case report Writing, editing, and publishing (internally)	27 Feb 2027 (10 Days)
	6. General administrative tasks	(2Days)

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

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QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES (CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Minimum requirements:

- **Education:** Master's degree: Economics, statistics, education, public policy
- **Work Experience:** A minimum of 8 years of relevant work experience is required
- **Skills:**
 - Education sector database analysis
 - Knowledge and understanding of public expenditure analysis
 - Workforce policy analysis
 - Teacher development and workforce management experience
 - Econometric modelling, including but not limited to cost-benefit analysis

- Statistical analysis, visualization, and communications
 - Qualitative research skills (interviewing, coding, discourse analysis)
 - Knowledge of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus
 - **Language Requirements:** English (fluent), French, Spanish, and/or Arabic would be an asset
 - **Desirables:**
 - Prior experience in workforce investment cost-benefit analysis in education or another sector
 - Prior experience in teacher workforce management analysis
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