

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultant to Senior Psychometrician for the Foundational Learning Study

CONTRACT MODALITY Individual Consultancy

DUTY STATION Islamabad, Pakistan

DURATION OF CONTRACT 4 months

Purpose of Assignment

The Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), established under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT), houses the National Assessment Wing (NAW), which is mandated to design and implement assessments that measure student learning outcomes at national scale, including the National Achievement Test (NAT) and the Foundational Learning Study (FLS).

With technical support from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) delivered principally through Dr. Abdullah Ferdous, Principal Researcher/Psychometrician and funding channelled through the World Bank's Data & Research in Education (DARE) technical assistance programme, NAW/PIE has successfully developed, piloted and administered NAT-2026 and FLS-2026. FLS-2026 is Pakistan's first nationally representative assessment of Grade 3 literacy and numeracy, anchored in the Federal Foundational Learning Policy 2024 and designed for alignment with the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) and Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPLs) so that Pakistan can report against SDG indicator 4.1.1.

Large-scale field administration of FLS-2026 has now been completed across public and private school networks, and the dataset is ready for psychometric analysis, scaling and national reporting. However, AIR's formally funded technical support concluded at the close of field administration, and the World Bank/DARE-funded scope does not extend to a number of technically critical, time-sensitive activities needed to convert the collected data into credible, internationally comparable national evidence, including extending large-scale administration to English-medium schools, completing psychometric analysis and benchmarking across all three languages of instruction (English, Urdu, Sindhi), and preparing the SDG 4.1.1 reporting documentation. NAW/PIE has formally requested continued technical support to close this gap.

The objective of this assignment is for UNICEF Pakistan to provide targeted technical assistance to NAW/PIE for the specific set of NAT- and FLS-related activities that fall outside the current World Bank/DARE scope, so that Pakistan's first national foundational learning evidence base is completed, benchmarked, and reported to international standards without loss of methodological continuity or delay.

Scope of Work

Under the supervision of UNICEF Pakistan's Education Section, and working closely with NAW/PIE, the consultant will:

1. **Technical documentation:** Prepare the technical documentation for NAT and SDG 4.1.1 reporting, in line with UIS/GAML technical criteria.

2. **English-medium administration:** Provide technical oversight for completing the Foundational Learning Assessment (FLA) in English-medium schools, where required.
3. **Psychometric and statistical analysis:** Analyse the FLS-2026 large-scale data in English, Urdu and Sindhi.
4. **Scaling, calibration, equating and validation:** Calibrate items, equate pilot results to the large-scale assessment, and validate the scales, consistently with the pilot-stage methods.
5. **Proficiency benchmarking:** Set proficiency benchmarks aligned with GPF and MPLs for Grade 3 literacy and numeracy.
6. **Technical report and SDG 4.1.1 package:** Prepare a comprehensive technical report and the full SDG 4.1.1 reporting package.
7. **National report inputs:** Provide technical inputs to the final national FLS report and present the findings to NAW/PIE and stakeholders.
8. **Knowledge transfer:** Give NAW/PIE staff ongoing technical guidance and capacity building throughout the assignment, so that national ownership of the methods is maintained.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
1. Inception and work planning	Inception report with a detailed work plan, analysis plan for English, Urdu and Sindhi, and timeline, agreed with NAW/PIE and UNICEF	13 Nov 2026
2. NAT technical documentation	Final NAT technical documentation and inputs for SDG 4.1.1 reporting, reviewed by NAW/PIE	30 Nov 2026
3. English-medium FLA administration	Technical note on the extension and completion of FLA administration in English-medium schools (sampling, instruments, quality assurance), where required	18 Dec 2026
4. Psychometric analysis	Report on the psychometric and statistical analysis of FLS-2026 data (item analysis, reliability, dimensionality) for all three languages	15 Jan 2027
5. Scaling, calibration and equating	Report on scaling, IRT calibration, pilot-to-scale equating and validation, with final scale scores for each language	29 Jan 2027

6. Proficiency benchmarking	Literacy and numeracy benchmarks for each language, aligned with GPF/MPLs, set through a benchmark-setting workshop with NAW/PIE and documented in a benchmarking report	12 Feb 2027
7. Technical report and SDG 4.1.1 package	Full technical report (methodology, analysis, scaling, benchmarks, interpretation) and SDG 4.1.1 reporting package, validated by NAW/PIE	26 Feb 2027
8. National reporting and dissemination	Technical inputs to the national FLS report, plus a presentation of findings to MoFEPT/PIE and stakeholders	26 Feb 2027
9. Knowledge transfer and capacity building	Knowledge-transfer summary listing the sessions delivered, materials and recommendations for future NAW/PIE assessments	26 Feb 2027

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

- 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 health insurance (and visa if applicable) 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.

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

- Minimum requirements:
- **Education:** An advanced PhD university degree in psychometrics, educational measurement, statistics or a related field.
- **Work Experience:** At least 10 years in large-scale learning assessment, including item response theory (IRT), item calibration, equating and scaling.
- **Skills (optional):**
- **Benchmarking:** Proven experience setting foundational learning benchmarks aligned with the GPF/MPL framework.
- **SDG reporting:** Working knowledge of UIS/GAML technical criteria and SDG 4.1.1 reporting requirements.
- **Multilingual assessment:** Experience designing and analysing assessments across several languages of instruction.
- **Regional experience:** Experience in South Asia, and in working with national assessment bodies and ministries, is desirable.
- **Capacity building:** A track record of building the capacity of government assessment teams.
- **Language Requirements:** Excellent written and spoken English
- **Desirables:**

- Direct experience of the FLS-2026 instrument design, pilot analysis or large-scale administration is a strong asset.
 - **Technical requirements:**

Applicants should submit a technical proposal of no more than five pages. It should include:

 - **Understanding of the assignment:** A brief summary showing understanding of the FLS-2026 context, the assessment design and SDG 4.1.1 reporting requirements.
 - **Methodology:** The proposed approach to:
 - psychometric analysis, calibration, scaling and pilot-to-scale equating in English, Urdu and Sindhi
 - benchmark setting aligned with GPF/MPLs.
 - **Work plan:** A timeline matching the deliverables and deadlines in the ToR, including the two planned trips to Islamabad.
 - **Capacity building:** How knowledge transfer to NAW/PIE staff will be delivered.
 - **Relevant experience:** Two or three examples of similar assignments, with links to or samples of technical reports or SDG 4.1.1 documentation (where available).
 - **Applicants should also attach a CV and a separate financial proposal showing:**
 - the all-inclusive daily fee for the 100 input days
 - a lump-sum cost for each of the two trips
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