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Digital skills and opportunities for youth employment towards digital economy

24-Aug-2021

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Final Evaluation of the project "Digital skills and opportunities for youth employment towards digital economy
in the Kyrgyz Republic"

Title of the Project:	"Digital skills and opportunities for youth employment towards digital economy in the Kyrgyz Republic"
Short title of the assignment:	International Evaluation Consultant
Duty station:	Home based
Contract type:	Individual Contract
Duration:	October-November 2021 (20 effective person days)

BACKGROUND

The project "Digital skills and opportunities for youth employment towards digital economy in the Kyrgyz Republic", funded by the Russian Federation, was launched in February 2019 for an initial period of 28 months and in May 2021, it was extended for additional 6 months. The current project ends in December 2021.

In general, the project contributes to the UNDAF Outcome 1: By 2022, inclusive and sustainable industrial, agricultural and rural development contribute to economic growth, decent work, improved livelihoods, food security and nutrition, especially among women and vulnerable groups, as well as CPD Results Area 1: Sustainable and Inclusive economic growth with the respective CPD outputs:

- CPD output: 1.1: Policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms enabled at the national and subnational levels for sustainable, resilient, inclusive and gender responsive economic growth.
- CPD Output.1.3: Women, youth and people from the regions with high poverty rate benefit from improved services and infrastructure, better skills, access to resources, sustainable jobs and livelihoods

The project's objectives are as follows:

1. Objective 1: Enhancing the capacity of formal education system and to apply new educational standards for digital skills and deliver the demand-driven curriculum to better prepare youth for digital economy. This will be achieved by establishing the new digital skills standards and strengthening the institutional capabilities of the formal education system (technical universities and vocational lyceums in Bishkek and Osh) to equip youth with job-ready, transferrable digital skills, including basic, intermedia, advanced digital entrepreneurial and soft skills, as well as enhancing the digital competencies of teachers to better integrate digital skills development in education. Under this component the Project will work with the Government of Kyrgyzstan on the formulation of the National Strategy on Digital Skills.

2. Objective 2: Creating platform for innovative partnerships with private sector in support to initiatives that would accelerate the growth of digital jobs and business in the country. This will be achieved through partnership with private sector in establishing the first ever IT hub in Osh City that will provide the space for youth from Osh, Batken and Jalalabat provinces to gain IT skills and connect them to employment and business development opportunities in digital economy. IT hub will serve a catalyst for boosting the innovations, creating networks of digital start-ups, digital experts, including from the Russian Federation, private sector and financial institutions to ensure access to venturing or other forms of capital.

The purpose of the Project is to contribute to creating environment and ecosystems to enhance ICT employability skills of the youth for new employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, and thus reducing inequalities and fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth and jobs creation in Kyrgyzstan. The core approach will be to create an enabling environment for youth to seize the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities offered by the growing digital economy. This will apply interventions aimed at the systemic changes in the system of the formal education, as well as boosting successful demonstration of the power of non-formal education to serve as accelerator for gradual changes in the entire ecosystems. The Project will be supporting relevant national policies, institutions and frameworks, upgrading education facilities to provide inclusive and effective learning environments, supporting supply of materials and enhanced teacher qualifications, facilitating best practice exchange and application of innovative instruments, and enabling equal access to education and vocational training for the vulnerable, especially for young women and girls, and persons with disabilities.

Coherent interventions suggested by the Project's design will be laying the ground to the following core objectives:

- 1) Enhancing the capacity of formal education system to apply new educational standards for digital skills and deliver the demand-driven curriculum to better prepare youth for digital economy;
- 2) Creating the space for innovative partnerships with private sector in support to initiatives that would accelerate the growth of digital jobs and digital business in the country;

To achieve these objectives, the Project will popularize and engage the socially and economically innovative ways of boosting digital technologies that may help marginalized young people, especially girls and young women in rural communities to increase their participation in the world economy, and eventually help them gain skills, confidence and opportunities to take more control over their future.

The main partners of the project are the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In accordance with the Project Document and UNDP Evaluation Plan, the project has to undertake an independent evaluation by its end. The aim of the evaluation is to assess the progress and results achieved within the project's lifespan.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the evaluation is to assess achieved results under Project, sustainability of benefits and draw lessons that can contribute to the decision making regarding the further engagement of this issue.

The main purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the programmatic progress, performance of the project interventions from the point of view of relevance, effectiveness, impact, organizational efficiency, sustainability as well as analysis of lessons learnt highlighting areas where the project performed less effectively than anticipated. The findings of the evaluation will contribute to effective programming, refining the approaches, organizational learning and accountability.

Key Evaluation questions and guiding principles.

Final evaluation of Project will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines¹. The Evaluation will assess the Project according to standard evaluation criteria, as elaborated below, in line with the United Nations Evaluations Group norms and principles.

¹ http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf

However, the consultant in his methodology may propose new or different questions in close coordination and consultation with UNDP. The evaluation will address the following four main evaluation questions.

1. What did the UNDP Project intend to achieve during the period under review?
2. To what extent has the project achieved its intended objectives?
3. To what extent has UNDP project been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the country's response and recovery process?
4. What factors contributed to or hindered Project's performance to the sustainability of results?

To address above mentioned questions, a project Theory of change (ToC) approach will be used to better understand how project's interventions are expected to lead the sustainable finance management in CIS countries. Also, question 3 will help us examine UNDP's support to COVID-19 response at the Country level. In addition to the above questions, the evaluation is expected to produce answers surrounding the evaluation criterial of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and impact, national ownership and lessons learned. Below are guiding questions.

- Relevance

- Was the Project relevant in addressing key challenges of implementing digital skills, identified by the Project Document?
- Whether important gaps exist, or opportunities are being missed?
- Did the Project activities and strategies fit the objectives, i.e. is there internal coherence between what the Project is doing and what it is trying to achieve?
- To what extent were the Project interventions relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries?
- Did the Project's outcome is expected to produce the desired change?

- Effectiveness ○ To what extent did the Project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the project's strategic vision?

- Assess the level to which Project implementation was flexible and adaptive to the context.
- To what extend did the Project mainstream a gender dimension and support gender responsive activities?
- How have stakeholders have been involved in the project's implementation?

- Efficiency ○ Assess whether the Project has utilized Project funding as per the agreed work plan to achieve the projected targets.

- Analyze the role of the Project board and how efficiently did the Project use the Project board.
- Assess the timeline and quality of the reporting followed by the Project.
- Analyze the performance of the M&E mechanism of the Project and the use of various M&E tools (any data available to the project etc.).
- Assess the qualitative and quantitative aspects of management and other inputs (such as equipment, monitoring and review and other technical assistance and budgetary inputs) provided by the project vis-à-vis achievement of outputs and targets.
- Identify factors and constraints, which have affected Project implementation including technical, managerial, organizational, institutional, and socio-economic policy issues in addition to other external factors unforeseen during the Project design (e.g. Covid-19 factor).
- How efficient was the overall staffing, planning and coordination within the project (including with stakeholders)?
- Have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?
- How well did the project communicate on its implementation and results?
- Overall, did the project provide value for money? Have resources been used efficiently?

- Sustainability and Impact

- Assess preliminary indications of the degree to which the Project results are likely to be sustainable beyond the Project's lifetime (both at the community and government level) and provide recommendations for strengthening sustainability.
- Did the intervention design include an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy?
- How strong is the commitment of the Government and other stakeholders to sustaining the results of Project's support and continuing initiatives?
- To what extent have national partners committed to providing continuing support (financial, staff, aspirational, etc.)?

- National ownership ○ Assess the degree of involvement of national partners and aligning to existing priorities of the local government in targeted areas.

- How has the project enhanced and contributed to the development of national capacity?

- Lessons learnt/ Conclusions

- An analysis of the main lessons learnt in relation to the effectiveness of foreseen strategies to achieve the Project's objectives
- An analysis of the main lessons learnt in relation to the effectiveness of implementation modalities

The review will cover the full period the project has been operational. And it is expected that the evaluator will develop and consecutively refine an evaluation matrix, which will relate to the above questions, the areas they refer to, the criteria for evaluating them, the indicators and the means for verification as a tool for the evaluation. The final evaluation matrix will be approved in the evaluation inception report.

Also, the project evaluation should cover the Human rights and Gender equality in line with the UNDP's Gender mainstreaming strategy and Gold Gender equality seal obtained in 2019. Gender disaggregated data will be collected, where available, and assessed against its project outcomes and awarded gender marker.

- To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the programme strategic design, implementation and reporting? Are there key achievements?
- In what way could UNDP enhance gender equality and human rights?
- What barriers have been seen to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in project activities and what can be done to improve inclusion of these groups?

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation will be summative and will employ a participatory approach whereby discussions with and surveys of key stakeholders provide/ verify the substance of the findings. Proposals submitted by prospective consultants should outline a strong mixed method approach to data collection and analysis, clearly noting how various forms of evidence will be employed vis-à-vis each other to triangulate gathered information.

Proposals should be clear on the specific role each of the various methodological approaches plays in helping to address each of the evaluation questions. The methodologies for data collection may include but not necessarily be limited to:

- Data collection method. During this phase, the evaluation consultant will be engaged in data collection activities. Given the current travel limitations due to COVID some of the data collections and interviews will be undertaken virtually. The evaluation consultant will liaise with CO staff and management, key government stakeholders and other partners and beneficiaries during this stage.

- Rigorous desk review of documentation supplied by UNDP team: Project documents, previous evaluations, project reports, key intervention reports and policies, etc. Where possible and relevant more detailed monitoring information will be analyzed, such as community monitoring data and activity reporting.²
- Stakeholder engagement. A participatory and transparent process will be followed to engage with multiple project stakeholders. Key informant interviews as appropriate, with major stakeholders (Interviews will be conducted online). Stakeholders will be selected in close coordination with the Project and will at minimum include:
 - Government authorities with a key responsibility towards the project.
 - UNDP COs in Kyrgyzstan.
 - Implementing partners, such as companies, educational institutes, experts and consultants. - Project beneficiaries.
 - Other stakeholders if relevant. ❖ Desk research:

Desk review of relevant documents such as project documents, progress reports, financial records, other relevant documents/reports, and secondary data or studies relating to the country context and situation.

❖ Interviews & focus group discussions with stakeholders (to be conducted online):

These interviews can take place on an individual basis or in groups, and have to cover all groups of partners, beneficiaries, implementing agencies, partners.

All meetings and conversations will be held only once the appropriate approvals have been obtained, for which UNDP will take primary responsibility. If approvals cannot be obtained on time, it is possible that some of these stakeholders may not be interviewed. ❖ Validation

The review findings will be presented to UNDP to collect feedback on these main findings and serve as a validation exercise.

Products expected from the evaluation:

- 1) Inception report with finalized and agreed terms of reference, evaluation matrix, questionnaires and agreed methodology of evaluation.
- 2) A comprehensive evaluation report with findings, recommendations, lessons learned.

The draft Report and Final Reports: The Report should be logically structured, contain evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations, and should be free of information that is not relevant to the overall analysis. The Report should respond in detail to the key focus areas described above.

Presentation: For presenting and discussing the draft final report interactively, UNDP will facilitate a concluding workshop for the Project stakeholders

The evaluation will be independent. The evaluation will be a consultative, inclusive and participatory process. The evaluation will be managed by the Project coordinator, UNDP M&E officer and Team Leader of UNDP SEG program leader to oversee evaluation management and quality assure throughout the evaluation process.

UNDP will help facilitate contacts and set up meetings, and overall support the evaluation.

Time Schedule

The timeframe and responsibilities for the evaluation process are tentatively as follows:

Tentative time schedule	Period (all tbc)
Inception report with agreed evaluation methodology, questionnaires, and action plan	2 days

² This data will only be included in the desk research when it is in a format that is accessible and relatively easily digestible for the reviewer.

Initial desk research	2 days
Interviews and/or group discussions	5 days
Preliminary analysis and the provision of the first draft report	4 days
Validation and the inception meeting with UNDP	1 days
Submission of final report (with minimum two rounds of comments)	4 days
Final discussion of the project with UNDP	2 day

DELIVERABLES

Deliverables	Due date	Payment structure
1 Provided Deliverable 1 (The first approved draft report)	End of October, 2021	50%
2 Provided Deliverable 2 (The final approved report)	November 20th, 2021	50%

Evaluation ethics.

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation' which are available here: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>. The consultants must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The consultants must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Accountability and reporting:

Under the leadership and guidance of UNDP M&E officer and Team Leader of Outcome 1 and under the direct supervision of the TL of the Outcome 1, the Consultant will fulfill the task within this ToR. The UNDP M&E Officer will provide overall strategic oversight and guidance for the entire process, and the coordination support will be assured by the CO respective team (Outcome 1 cluster). The Consultant will be certified against each deliverable by the SEG Team Leader, which will serve as a justification for payments.

All reports should be provided in English language, with the detailed description of the fulfilled tasks, according to the present Terms of Reference, and the direct contribution of the expert. Analytical documents, reports and notes developed by experts should be attached to the reports as annexes, which will serve as a justification for payment.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum Master's degree in social science, or other areas, relevant to the subject of the assignment.
- At least of 5 years of professional experience in the field of education / digital economy / ICT/ in conducting evaluations / / digital economy related strategies and/or policies in programs and/or projects
- Strong knowledge of UNDP and its working approaches including partnership approaches with Government, civil society and community groups
- Fluency in English language

TRAVEL

Travels are not foreseen. All tasks are implemented online.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE RECOMMENDED CONTRACTOR

Statement of Medical Fitness for Work.

For an Individual Contractor who is of 65 years of age or older, and on an assignment requiring travel, be it for the purpose of arriving at the duty station or as an integral duty required under the TOR, a full medical examination and statement of fitness to work must be provided. However, this is not a requirement for individuals on RLA contracts

Where there is no UN office nor a UN Medical Doctor present in the location of the Individual Contractor prior to commencing the travel, either for repatriation or duty travel, the Individual Contractor may choose his/her own preferred physician to obtain the required medical clearance.

Inoculations/Vaccinations

Individual Consultants/Contractors are required to have vaccinations/inoculations when travelling to certain countries, as designated by the UN Medical Director. The cost of required vaccinations/inoculations, when foreseeable, must be included in the financial proposal. Any unforeseeable vaccination/inoculation cost will be reimbursed by UNDP.

Security Clearance.

The Consultant should undertake the BESAFE training. These requirements apply for all Consultants, attracted individually or through the Employer.

SCOPE OF PRICE PROPOSAL AND SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

Contracts based on lump-sum

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum and payment terms around specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables. Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR. In order to assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals, the financial proposal will include a breakdown of this lump sum amount (including travel, per diems, and number of anticipated working days)..

Preferred Currency of Offer:

United State Dollars (USD)

UNDP CONTRIBUTION

- 1) Arranging meetings\interviews with counterparts and beneficiaries.
- 2) Project related documents such as Project Document, Annual Work Plans and/or Progress Reports. 3) Security charges are not applicable.

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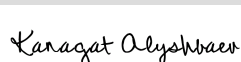
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Digital Skills Project Coordinator

United Nations Development Program

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12/29/2020

UNDP Kyrgyzstan

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