

CALL FOR PROPOSAL (Institution/Organization only)

UNESCO Bangkok
Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Development of a review and assessment tool for education sector approaches to addressing learner and teacher mental health and psychosocial well-being (MHPSS)

Organizational Unit: UNESCO Bangkok Office, Section for Inclusive Quality Education, Education for Health and Well-being Team

Type of contract: Contract for Services (Institution/Organization)

Duration: November 2022 – June 2023

Application Deadline: 9 November 2022, 17:00 hrs. Bangkok time

1. Nature of the Consultancy

To develop an analytical approach and review and assessment tool, based on the best available evidence, technical and operational guidance and standards, that supports data collection on the status, nature and improvement needs of education sector mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) policies and programmes in formal education settings.

2. Background

Good physical and mental health and well-being enable children's access to and participation in education, because children learn better when they are physically and mentally healthy, well-nourished and safe. As defined by the WHO, mental health refers to 'a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'. Good mental health is related to mental and psychosocial well-being, the latter encompassing a positive state when a person thrives and typically expressed through the domains of: personal well-being; inter-personal well-being and, skills and knowledge that enable this positive state. To better enable children and young people to realize this positive outcome, diverse practitioners working in this field advocate for and support access to mental health and psychosocial support, which refers to any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental health conditions¹.

Before COVID-19, WHO estimated that 10-20% of children and adolescents worldwide had mental health conditions which, in many cases began as early as age 14. Also pre-pandemic, east Asia and Pacific, and south Asia subregions led global figures with the largest percentage of 10–19-year-olds with mental disorders².

As of August 2020, 143 countries had implemented countrywide school closure in response to the surge of COVID-19, impacting millions of children and teachers³. Yet the full nature and extent of mental health issues

¹ UNICEF, 2019. Mental health and psychosocial technical note. UNICEF, New York.

<https://www.unicef.org/media/73726/file/UNICEF-MH-and-PS-Technical-Note-2019.pdf>

² UNICEF. 2021. The State of the World's Children 2021: On My Mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health. UNICEF, New York, October 2021.

³ UNESCO. 2020. Education: From Disruption to Recovery. UNESCO, Paris, 2020; UNICEF. 2020. Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?. New York, UNICEF.

as major effects of lockdowns and distancing measures, especially for learners and teachers, remain to be understood or addressed in the Asia research and policy landscape⁴. Although the need to support child and adolescent mental health and psychosocial well-being was already urgent before the pandemic, research indicates some negative impacts on mental health among young people due to COVID-19. Reported stressors include increased isolation, disconnection from others, and increasing anxiety about the future⁵. It is noteworthy that the vulnerabilities to poor physical and mental health often intersect with other vulnerabilities such as gender, disability and socio-economic status.

In a 2020 UNICEF survey involving more than 17000 parents and 8000 children across 46 countries, 83% of children and 89 % of parents reported an increase in negative feelings while 46% of caregivers observed signs of psychological distress in their children⁶. Among young people in South Asia who participated in a 2021 U-Report study, 45 per cent said they felt sad, afraid or angry/frustrated in coping with COVID-19. Only 41 per cent of participants knew who to contact if they needed mental health support from a health professional, with more girls than boys not having the required knowledge⁷.

Teachers' physical and mental health and well-being were also negatively affected during the same period. Large-scale school closures in the Asia region led to school shifting to online or remote teaching and learning which had profound impacts on the working condition of teachers. A study investigating the experiences of the education workforce in using digital technologies for teaching -learning found that around 23.7% reported increased workload and 42.7% did not think they were able to work efficiently during the pandemic. Top concerns noted among participating teachers in the study were job security, lack of adequate resources in digital form, lack of interactions with peers and students and their own and their students' mental well-being⁸.

Safe return to school and creating an enabling learning environment for all students that includes the provision of psycho-social support, have been agreed by Ministers of Education and broader education sector partners in Asia-Pacific as both priority actions for immediate COVID-19 learning recovery and the longer-term transformation of education systems that invest in learner and teacher health and well-being through comprehensive school health approaches. These policy priorities were highlighted in June 2022, at the second Asia-Pacific Region Education Ministers' Conference (APREMC II) and captured in its resulting [Bangkok Statement](#).

A forthcoming regional conceptual framework for the provision of multi-tiered, multisectoral mental health services for children and adolescents identifies and proposes the crucial role of the education sector in supporting learner MHPSS as embedded in its core functions, spanning the continuum of responsive care, prevention and promotion of MHPSS⁹. Citing the particular and complementary contributions by teachers, guidance counsellors and other key education personnel, the framework highlights critical interventions that the education sector is uniquely positioned to deliver, including, *inter alia*: supporting social and emotional learning, skills, and resilience; promoting positive peer relationship (prevention efforts by teachers); screening and referral; provision of counselling; and initial management of mental health conditions (responsive care by guidance counsellors).

⁴ Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Asia Regional Synthesis Report <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/16436/file/Regional%20Situation%20Analysis%20Report.pdf>

⁵ UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO. (forthcoming). Five essential pillars for promoting and protecting mental health in schools and learning environments. A policy brief for national governments.

⁶ UNICEF. 2020. Child Protection Learning Brief #2 Responding to the mental health and psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on children and families. <https://www.unicef.org/media/83951/file/MHPSS-UNICEF-Learning-brief.pdf>

⁷ UNICEF. 2022. Mental Health in South Asia. An investment opportunity for the private and public sectors. Kathmandu, UNICEF.

⁸ Education International Asia-Pacific and ILO. 2021. Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Education and Teaching in Asia-Pacific: Future of Work in Education.

⁹ UNICEF. (forthcoming). Strengthening mental health and psychosocial support systems and services for children and adolescents in the East Asia and Pacific region. Regional Conceptual Framework and Report. Bangkok, UNICEF.

Learning environments in and of themselves have a profound influence on mental health and well-being from early childhood to adolescence. Positively addressing school / learning culture and academic pressures with a focus on creating safe, respectful and inclusive learning environments are all essential whole-of-education approaches to mental health promotion.¹⁰ These approaches and entry-points at multiple levels of the education sector, alongside the engagement of actors and partners in other sectors such as health and social welfare, are aligned with newly launched global standards on health promoting schools with a companion guideline on school health services^{11,12}.

A wealth of policy, technical and operational tools exist that give guidance to the education sector – across diverse implementation contexts – on the essential components of effective MHPSS programming that is led by and housed within the education sector, and where and how such elements should intersect with other sectors. As countries are at different stages of maturity in their school health programmes¹³, including on MHPSS preventive and responsive care, in order to aid the acceleration, scale up and institutionalization of integrated MHPSS programming in and through education, there is an identified need to support education sector-led processes to critically assess their own programming and identify priority gaps and needs for action.

Building on its ongoing partnership with UNICEF's regional offices for East Asia and Pacific (EAPRO) and South Asia (ROSA), and in the context of the regional Thematic Working Group on School Health, Nutrition and Education, that it co-chairs with UNICEF and WHO Southeast Asia Regional Office (SEARO), UNESCO Bangkok aims through the current assignment to enable Ministries of Education in the region to review and assess their readiness and response efforts to address learner and teacher mental health and psychosocial well-being needs. The tool produced as output of this consultancy will serve to generate national rapid assessment reports which, when used by Ministries of Education and their partners will further inform efforts to integrate MHPSS in medium and longer term policy and programme efforts in the contexts of comprehensive school health, nutrition and well-being initiatives that support both well-being and learning outcomes.

3. Work Assignment

Under the overall authority of the Director of UNESCO Bangkok, Asia and Pacific Bureau for Education, the overall guidance of the Chief of Unit for Inclusive Quality Education, and the direct supervision of the Regional Advisor on Education for Health and Wellbeing, the contractor is expected to design, test and finalize a review and assessment tool to support education sector rapid assessment of the availability, nature and extent of national education policy and programme approaches to supporting learner and teacher MHPSS needs and their overall mental health and psychosocial well-being.

Objectives:

- i. To develop an analytical approach and draft Excel-based tool, informed by the best available evidence, current best practice, technical and operational guidance and standards, that supports data collection on the status, nature and improvement needs of education sector MHPSS policies and programmes in formal education settings. The tool should support rapid data collection and immediately summarize and graphically present results for ease of consultation, reflection and debate among national/provincial Ministry of Education personnel on policy and programme strengths, weaknesses, relevance and opportunities and further enable priority-setting for follow-up action. The tool should be designed for facilitator-led assessment approach.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ WHO and UNESCO. 2021. Making every school a health-promoting school: global standards and indicators for health-promoting schools and systems. Geneva, WHO.

¹² WHO. 2021. WHO guideline on school health services. Geneva, WHO.

¹³ WHO-SEARO. 2021. Rapid assessment of national school health programmes in countries of the WHO South-East Asia Region: A summary. World Health Organization, Regional Office for South-East Asia, New Delhi, WHO.

- ii. To test the relevance, feasibility and acceptability of the tool with a cross section of education sector personnel in at least two countries (tentatively, Bhutan and the Philippines.)
- iii. To finalize the review and assessment tool based on field testing with education sector personnel in 2 countries and stakeholder feedback by UNESCO and partners.

The consultancy will produce the following outputs:

- (i) A draft, Excel-based review and assessment tool with multiple thematic tabs and user guidance to support a discussion with a cross-section of ministry of education personnel at different levels with policy, technical and operational responsibilities concerning learner and teacher health and well-being generally, and MHPSS specifically (see for example, UNESCO's Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool ([SERAT](#))).
- (ii) A finalised review and assessment tool following field testing with ministry of education personnel in at least 2 countries, and based on consolidated feedback from education sector personnel, UNESCO and other strategic UN and civil society partners.

In this regard, the contractor will be required to carry out the following tasks:

1. Desk review

- conduct desk-based literature review of existing global and (sub) regional technical and operational guidance, research reports, analytical toolkits and implementation checklists, including in emergency and crisis contexts, for education sector approaches to teacher and learner MHPSS that supports well-being and learning outcomes. This will include the specific considerations of vulnerable groups of children, including children with disabilities, migrant populations, as well as identifying any gender differences¹⁴. Desk review will include English-language materials only.

2. Analytical framework and Inception report

- On the basis of the desk review and with reference to the key resources identified, outline an analytical framework of the depth, scope, sequence and key variables that will comprise the content of the **education sector MHPSS review and assessment tool** for use by and with ministry of education personnel.
- Produce a methodology for the development and field-testing of the review and assessment tool in the two country context.
- Prepare an inception report that outlines this analytical framework and the key findings of the desk review along with the chosen methodology.

3. Tool development

- Construct the review and assessment tool through an iterative process involving feedback from UNESCO and partners. Early draft versions of the tool should be designed with content formatted in MS Word for ease of review and revisions. A Beta version in MS Excel should be produced following the review stage for the purpose of field testing. The Excel tool should include clear guidance for content contributors and for tool administrators on its usage, and be accompanied by a basic sample reporting template.

4. Field testing and validation of the draft tool

- Draft a short concept note with agenda for the in-country consultation to field test and validate the draft review and assessment tool using participatory methodologies

¹⁴ This is not exhaustive

- Facilitate an in-person consultation workshop with education personnel in at least 2 countries (tentatively, Bhutan and the Philippines) to demonstrate, test, validate and receive feedback on the structure and content of the tool and make further refinements to the tool based on inputs received

Note: UNESCO Bangkok will provide technical inputs to the workshop agenda for in-country consultations and will lead on logistic preparations for each country consultation, including the provision of simultaneous language interpretation as required. Any travel costs by the contractor (the lead consultant) to participate in these meetings will be covered directly by UNESCO as part of the overall meeting budget.

5. Finalization of the tool and consultancy close-out report:

- Finalize, based on feedback received, the structured, designed, Excel based tool, ensuring full functionality of all its elements and user interface, along with the final sample reporting template.
- Prepare a short, narrative project close-out report (maximum 5, A4 pages) for UNESCO and partners that summarizes the key learnings from the consultancy process, along with any recommendations for future engagement with Ministries of Education for application of the tool.

4. Work Schedule and Expected Deliverables

The deliverables for this consultancy shall be the following (submission dates provisional):

- i) An updated workplan and an inception report outline (**November 2022**)
- ii) Inception report (maximum 30, A4 pages, excluding annexes) composed of findings from the desk review, criteria for selection of desk review items, draft analytical framework and methodology for tool development, field-testing and finalization (**January 2023**)
- iii) Draft Beta version of the review and assessment tool in MS Excel and draft in-country consultation agenda for field testing (**March 2023**)
- iv) Final review and assessment Excel tool including guidance information and companion reporting template, that incorporates feedback from the field testing, along with project close-out report (**June 2023**)

In line with UNESCO's overall gender mainstreaming strategy, the contractor is expected to integrate a gender perspective and apply gender analysis and mainstreaming concepts whenever feasible.

5. Duration of Contract

The contractor will be required to work during the period **November 2022 to June 2023** (tentatively).

6. Location and Travel

The contractor will be home based in any location. It is expected that the contractor will be available to meet with the UNESCO team (online) during office hours of Bangkok, Thailand. No duty travel or physical presence at the UNESCO Bangkok office is expected. Costs related to in-person participation of, and facilitation by the contractor (the lead consultant) at in-country consultation workshops will be separately covered by UNESCO.

7. Qualifications or specialized knowledge/experience required

Required:

- Advanced degree in any of the related areas: education, school health, social and emotional learning, psychosocial well-being, mental health, adolescent health, public health, social work, psychology or social sciences.
- Minimum 5 years of extensive professional knowledge and field experience (5 to 7 years) in relevant technical areas listed above. Must submit at least two (2) references of projects in the field that demonstrate this subject matter expertise.

- Experience in conducting research/analysis in any of the technical areas mentioned above, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
- Excellent analytical, writing and communication skills including the production of written technical content for a general audience.
- Fluency in spoken and written English.
- IT infrastructure, software and devices to support remote meetings, communication and online/digital data collection, as appropriate.
- Experience in using Microsoft Excel or any other similar common applications for tool design.

Desirable:

- Experience working in the Asian context and demonstrated understanding of education systems in the region including familiarity with mental health impacts on, and responses by the education sector related to COVID-19.
- Previous experience working with the UN and/or other multilateral, bilateral and civil society development partners.
- Previous experience working across diverse language and cultural context in multiple countries simultaneously and coordinating work with partners in this operational context.
- Previous experience in developing multi-sectoral approaches to addressing mental health and psychosocial support needs, including in post-crisis or emergency contexts.

8. Eligibility

The call for proposals is open to suitably qualified organizations/institutions/companies.

9. Audit assurance clause:

UNESCO shall have the right, at its own expense, to have the Contractor's books and records pertaining to the project bank account and project execution reviewed (and, if desired, copied) upon prior written notice at any reasonable time agreeable to the Contractor by the UNESCO's, internal/external auditor, auditors as UNESCO may appoint or the Contractor's own auditor.

UNESCO may conduct, or arrange for, a periodic evaluation of the contractor's implementation of the project. To this end, the contractor will upon UNESCO's request, enable representatives or designees of UNESCO to visit the project site(s) and facilities, inspect property and review books and records related to the project."

10. Submission of Expression of Interest:

At minimum, Expression of Interest should include the following:

i. Technical Proposal

The Technical Proposal should demonstrate the contractor's response to the Terms of Reference by identifying the specific components proposed and how the objectives/outputs/delivery shall be addressed. A comprehensive description of the management structure should be provided, identifying the key personnel that will be assigned to support the implementation of the proposed methodology, clearly defining the qualifications of each team member (if relevant) in relation the relevant areas of the TOR.

Moreover, the proposal should demonstrate how the proposed methodology meets or exceeds the TOR, while ensuring appropriateness of the approach to local conditions and the rest of the project operating environment. This methodology must be laid out in an implementation timetable and the means of quality assurance of implementation also noted.

The technical proposal should not exceed **five** A4 pages, including specific reference of **two** relevant examples of successfully undertaking equivalent or comparable assignments.

ii. Budget proposal, quoted in US dollars, that is aligned with the tasks of the work assignment. The Budget proposal should indicate the costed level of effort of the various components of the assignment, with rate per unit (cost per person/day), each relative to the other.

iii. CVs of the key personnel that will lead/contribute to this assignment.

The expression of interest must be received by email at ige.bgk@unesco.org no later than **17:00 hrs (Bangkok time) on 9 November 2022**. Only complete applications submitted before the deadline will be considered.