Terms of Reference (ToR)

Impact Assessment of the Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA).

BACKGROUND

The Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) is a national programme that aims to improve the proficiency level of literacy and numeracy skills among illiterate youths and adult population in Afghanistan. The first phase of the ELA Programme (2008 – 2010), funded by the Government of Japan provided literacy courses to 255,438 youths and adults in 50 districts across 9 provinces\(^1\) of Afghanistan. With additional funding from the Government of Japan in 2010-2013 the outreach of ELA Programme (Phase II) was expanded to 99 districts across 18 provinces\(^2\) with a total reach of 325,662 (60% women) youths and adults. Building on the lessons learned from the previous phases, ELA Programme Phase III started in November 2013 and in addition to the government of Japan’s funding, the governments of Sweden (December 2014) and Finland (July 2015) also committed more funding to ELA Programme and as a consequence of that its geographical coverage was expanded to 30 provinces across Afghanistan. Additionally, in June 2016, the Government of Finland committed further support to ELA III that resulted in the expansion of ELA to the remaining four provinces of Afghanistan. This effectively increased ELA Phase III’s total funding portfolio to approximately $34 million over a period of four years and the total geographical coverage to 155 district across Afghanistan, with expected reach of 634,000 youths and adults (60% women) over the same period. ELA Programme still remains the largest literacy programme with a national outlook in Afghanistan. In addition to literacy provision, ELA provides technical support to the Literacy Department in areas of capacity building and institutional reform, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and outreach, curriculum development and teacher training. Furthermore, ELA Programme provided technical support to the MoE to design and develop a new curriculum framework and instructional materials for the youths and adult literacy, and basic Education. Currently, UNESCO continues to provide technical support the LD to develop Skill Based Literacy (SBL) workbooks to compliment basic literacy course for those learners who may opt to further their education in different skill areas. Eight skill areas; Bee Keeping, poultry farming, fish farming, tailoring, Basic health and first aid, Starting your own business and vegetable gardening, were identified through a rapid needs assessment survey to identify skill areas for the development of this instructional materials. Seven of the eight skill areas are in the draft stage and are expected to be piloted in September 2018 for 3 months. The findings of process monitoring and MTR of ELA programme noted that there was undeniable need for creating linkages between literacy programming and social economic development strategies through developing special content inform of Skill Based Literacy (SBL) that embeds skills in literacy learning to enable target learners and especially women and young girls, to increase their participation in socio economic activities thus contributing to the attainment of the national development goals; sustainable peace and development. This study should as well try to identify
opportunities for strengthening these linkages between Skill Based Literacy (SBL) and literacy programming – as well as synchronization with other literacy programme and livelihoods interventions that are being roll out through NGOs and other government Ministries. In addition, this study should look innovatively at how to improve the quality and relevance of literacy programmes delivery through, looking at ways of integrating packages and elements for change such as inventive delivery methods with more community based literacy practices. It is deemed necessary to for this practices to be connected to the realities and aspirations of learners and especially women and rural communities and to encompass relevant key themes such health issues, income generation opportunities, use of ICT, Life skills, human rights, gender empowerment etc.

The principle goal of ELA Programme was to ensure the country understands the importance of literacy and can address the challenges of literacy in a sustainable and proactive manner—given that the budget allocated to literacy under the MoE is roughly under 2% of the education budget. UNESCO’s main focus is to support the MoE to establish a decentralized modality of implementation that connects MoE with provinces, districts and communities in all phases of planning, implementation and monitoring. UNESCO endeavors to continue this role and further enhance and strengthen its role in institutional development so that the MoE departments responsible for youth and adult literacy become capable of sustaining this important decentralized modality of literacy provision. Therefore the findings of this assessment are very critical for UNESCO, ELA donors, MoE and other stakeholders in redefining their roles after the end ELA III programme, identifying priority areas of interventions and drawing lessons from the past achievements and challenges to inform future youth and adult literacy programme in Afghanistan.

This evaluation was prompted after consultations were between UNESCO and ELA donors; Embassy of Sweden and Finland. Nevertheless, the study will cover the whole ELA programme funded by all the three ELA donors; governments of Japan, Sweden and Finland.

A. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT AND INTENDED USE

The main purpose of this impact assessment is to measure through an independent evaluation the changes that can be attributed to the current ELA programme supported by the Governments of Sweden, Japan and Finland. The purpose of this study can be summarized in terms of accountability and learning; (i) to gather data about the effectiveness and impacts of ELA programme to make sure that the intervention is still on track and is likely to reach its objectives, and (ii) to provide UNESCO, ELA donors and its partners with an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of ELA phase four programme interventions. For the purposes of this assessment, impact will be understood as the wider effects of the programme – social, economic, technical and environment – on individuals (disaggregated by gender and age groups), communities and institutions. The impact can be direct or indirect, intended or unintended, positive or negative, macro (within the sector) and micro (household). The assessment results will generate evidence of key achievements and challenges to inform decision making process for
donors and UNESCO’s senior management as well as providing an opportunity for understanding how ELA programme delivery mechanism works best, under which circumstances, and how this can be improved in the future. In addition, these assessment results are expected to inform the next phase of ELA (ELA 4), the future programming work of the UNESCO Office in Kabul, and the Non-formal Education (NFE) sector in Afghanistan as a whole. This impact study will examine ELA programme from its inception in 2009 through the midpoint of ELA anticipated lifecycle, up to the end of December 2016. This study will mainly focus on the geographical locations covered by phases one, two and partly phase three of ELA programme.

Findings and conclusions from this study will be shared with the Embassies of Sweden, Finland and Japan in Kabul, UNESCO Regional Bureau in Bangkok, and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg, UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, the Ministry of Education and other literacy partners and stakeholders.

B. **SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY**

The impact assessment should review all aspects of the current ELA programme from the first phase through to the end of the second phase and partially the third phase.

Assessment methodology will include:

- **Desk review:** The assessment team will examine project documents, project data, Implementation Programme agreements (IPA) with MoE, TA study report, ELA Skill development programme (SDP) reports, Learner Assessment reports, case studies, proposal, donor, terminal and midterm reports, NESP I, II & III (2010-2021), ANDS report (2008), NVRA (2009), National Priority Programs (NPP 2010), Curriculum unit of Literacy Department and capacity development report (2012) internal education sector strategy documents, internal policies, guides and training documents and any other relevant documents. The main purpose of this desk review is to build a good understanding of the available information on ELA programme within the wider context of education sector before conducting an in-depth study of this intervention. More specifically, this review will aid in understanding the long term trends in terms of programme implementation and outputs since its inception, design of the sampling frame, defining the original scope of this programme, geographical coverage, and target populations; determining sampling methodology; and analyzing the risks posed by various contextual realities.

- **Case studies:** The assessment team may pick 5 to 7 case studies of beneficiaries who successfully completed Basic general literacy (BGL) courses and/or skill development program as a case studies to study in further depth to assess the impact of individual beneficiaries of literacy provision through ELA. The team may also want to select a few government staff who are direct beneficiaries of ELA capacity building efforts at both national and sub-national levels to study in further details the impact on individual capacity improvement as a result of this programme. In addition, case studies of departments or units within the Deputy Ministry of Education (LD) can also be studied further in depth to
assess the impact on institutional and organizational capacities. Use of case study is an appropriate evaluation tool in this context because it provides the opportunity to probe further the in depth experiences of specific target beneficiaries or a subset of beneficiaries of ELA as a distinct part of whole hence avoiding losses in the breath that comes from generalization. More specifically, this will allow for greater latitude in seeking out and assessing the programme impact through exposing a lot more about programme processes and outcome and way they interact with each other.

- **Field visits**: The assessment team will study ELA activities in the 27 provinces covered until December 2016, and will interview beneficiaries who agree to share information, survey target population, conduct focus groups randomly- selected beneficiaries who benefited from ELA literacy and skill based training courses. Selected field visit to the programme targets will be critical for both collecting data and to build good understanding of ELA target beneficiaries, geographical coverage disparities and risks related to project implementation in an authentic setting.

- **Interviews with stakeholders**: The assessment team should pay particular attention to the interviewing of stakeholders, namely UNESCO national and international staff, Deputy Ministry of Education staff directly involved in the implementation of ELA (both at national and sub-national levels), ELA TA staff (employed through technical assistantship programme), beneficiaries targeted, community committees members (shuras and CDCs), LIFE committees members (literacy partners), ELA donors (Sweden, Japan and Finland) and others as relevant. The main purpose for employing this methodology is to understand the impact of ELA programme both from the perspective of those involved and how they have benefited or affected by this interventions of this programme.

C. **ISSUES TO BE COVERED**

This assessment will mainly aim at identifying any changes resulting from ELA programme interventions, establish causal connections between the changes and the programme inputs and measure the magnitude of the change. It will particularly focus on and try to assess a wide range of broad and key and strategic performance indicators, including project effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, performance, sustainability and coverage. In doing so, this assessment should address the following questions (Refer to OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and indicative questions – OECD-DAC 2002):

- Did the benefits reach the target group as intended, or did it reach a large portion of unintended population? Were benefits distributed fairly between gender and age groups and across social and cultural barriers?
- To what extend has the intervention achieved its objectives (outputs and outcomes) or will do so in the future?
- To what extent do changes in the target geographical areas of ELA consistent with the planned outputs, purpose and goal of the evaluated intervention?

- To what extent can the identified changes be attributable to the intervention rather than extraneous factors?

- What could have been done better to make the intervention more effective?

- What are the intended and unintended, positive and negative, direct or indirect, counterfactual effects of ELA programme intervention on people and institutions?

- How has the intervention affected the overall situation of the target beneficiaries and stakeholders?

- How is the intervention consistent with the needs and priorities of the illiterate youths and adults (15 years of age and above) especially the women and marginalized rural communities, national policies and development goals of Afghanistan and ELA donor?

- In which ways is the overall interventions consistent with capacity building needs and priorities of the Ministry of Education, particularly the Deputy Ministry of Education for Literacy (DMoEL)? Has there been discernible change in the institutional, organizational and individual capacity in management and provision of youth and adult literacy by DMoEL?

- What are the key development changes as a result of this intervention on the Ministry of Education, particularly the Deputy Ministry of Literacy for Education (DMoEL)? To what extent has the intervention contributed to capacity development and system strengthening of government and community based institutions? To what extent can changes that have occurred during the period covered by the evaluation be identified and measured?

- What do beneficiaries and other stakeholders affected by the intervention perceive to be the effects of ELA on themselves?

- To what extent can identified changes be attributed to the intervention of ELA? What would have occurred without the intervention of ELA?

- To what extend have reasonable alternative reasons attributable for identified changes been considered and reliably ruled out?

- How is ELA intervention consistent and complimentary with activities supported by other NGOs and Government Ministries?

- How is ELA aligned to the development partners’ policies, operational and administrative systems of the government of Afghanistan both at national and sub-national levels? To what extend is the intervention consistent with the policy of supporting government ownership of the programme?

- In what ways is the intervention technically adequate to address the challenges and barriers of access, quality and equity to youths and adult literacy in Afghanistan?
- To what extend is the programme consistent with the policies and priorities of the three ELA donors?
- Is the intervention consistent and complementary with activities supported by other donor organizations? If so, to what extend can this be justified by the activities?
- Do the Government of Afghanistan and other adult literacy partners have the technical and financial capacity to maintain the benefits from ELA after cessation of external support from UNESCO and the donors?
- Will the benefits produced by this intervention be maintained after cessation of external support? To what extend can it be maintained?
- To what extend is the intervention consistent with Afghanistan’s priorities and effective demand? In what ways is it supported by local institutions and well integrated with local social and cultural conditions?
- Are requirements of local ownership satisfied? Did the government partners participate in the planning and implementation of ELA?
- To what extend are the relevant government Ministries and Departments characterized by good governance, including effective management and organization?
- To what extend is the use of technology utilized in this programme in a manner that is appropriate to the economic, educational and cultural conditions in Afghanistan?
- Is the intervention compatible with a sustainable use of natural resources? Or is it harmful to the natural environment? How can this be justified by the results?
- Has the ELA programme been managed with reasonable regard for efficiency? What measures have been taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources are efficiently used?
- In what ways could the intervention have been implemented with fewer resources without reducing the quality and quantity of the results?
- How could more of the same result have been produced with the same resources?
- How could an altogether different type of intervention have solved the same development problem but at a lower cost?
- Was the intervention economically worthwhile, given possible alternative uses of the available resources? If not, how should the resources allocated to the intervention have been used for another, more worthwhile, purpose?
- Is the intervention producing the most appropriate impact, given the context and resources available? To what extend can this be justified by results?
D. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The overall coordination including monitoring progress and administration will be undertaken by a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be established, with the following members; UNESCO’s Chief of Education Unit, ELA Program Manager, ELA M&E Officer, 3 donor representatives: Japan, Sweden and Finland, a representative from LD, Research section. The main function of this reference group will be in:

- Establish the terms of reference for the Steering Committee.
- Providing inputs to the impact study ToR
- Monitoring the recruitment of external evaluators
- Approving the selection of evaluators
- Reviewing ad commenting on preliminary findings and recommendations (draft reports)
- Approving the final report; and,
- Establishing a dissemination and utilization strategy

The Chief of Education Unit, in coordination with 1 donor representative will lead the Steering Committee and decide in case of disagreement among the committee members. The ELA Monitoring Officer will be responsible to facilitate access to information, human and documentation sources, travel, etc. In case of any changes in positions, committee and field focal persons will be adjusted accordingly.

UNESCO Office in Kabul, Programme Operations section will be responsible for providing required materials, administrative and secretariat support, telecommunications, printing of documents, travel arrangements, office space and logistics including for field work, etc. The evaluator will be responsible for dissemination of all methodological tools such as surveys, but UNESCO office shall be responsible for providing contact details of key stakeholders, networks and any other relevant parties of interest in this study. In addition, the individual leading the assessment will be responsible for conducting all field and research activities, and for writing and editing the final report. The donor and implementing partners might be requested to provide some relevant documents related to this study that are not in the custody of UNESCO where necessary.

E. QUALIFICATION OF EVALUATION TEAM

The Evaluation Team will be comprised of a team of 3 persons (one international consultant, and two national assistants. One of the national consultant will preferably be female and willing to travel to the field locations.

(i) Team Leader:
The assessment should be led by an individual with competence in project/programme evaluation and adult education, and who has worked with non-formal education systems and development particularly with more focus on youth and adult literacy, in both humanitarian and development context. In particular, the Team Leader should demonstrate the following:

**Essential Skills:**

- Must hold a postgraduate degree in education, research, Project Management or any other relevant field;
- Must have at least 10 years professional work experience in the areas of programme evaluation, especially in literacy and education, Non formal education and institutional capacity building and strengthening
- Extensive conceptual and methodological skills and experience in applying qualitative and quantitative research evaluation methods;
- Prior impact assessment experience is required;
- Experience in organizational management, structures and systems, operations, capacity development, reporting, and monitoring is desired but not essential
- In-country or regional similar work experience will be an added advantage
- Excellent communication skills necessary for building rapport with stakeholders, facilitating participation and effective presentation of result to diver audience.

**Desirable qualifications:**

- Detailed knowledge of the role of UN and its programming is desirable
- Excellent written and verbal skills in English language.
- Prior experience in the region is an added advantage.
- Knowledge of the local languages (Dari and/or Pashto) is desirable

(ii) **National Team:**

**Essential qualifications:**

- Must hold a post-graduate degree in education, research or any other relevant field. A bachelor’s degree with 7 years of relevant experience will be considered.
- A minimum of 5 years of work experience professional work experience in the areas of programme evaluation, especially in literacy and education, Non formal education and institutional capacity building and strengthening Extensive knowledge of and experience in applying qualitative and quantitative evaluation/research methods.
- Prior research or evaluation research is required.
- Excellent communicative, both spoken and written skills in the local languages (Dari and/or Pashto)
- Must be able and willing to be deployed to the provincial and district areas covered by ELA programme.

Desirable qualifications:
- Knowledge of the role of UN and its programming is desirable
- Excellent written and verbal skills in English language is desirable.
- Knowledge of the local languages (Dari and/or Pashto) is desirable.

F. REPORTING, DELIVERABLES AND SCHEDULE

The expected deliverables and timelines for delivery will be:

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<th>DELIVERABLE</th>
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<tr>
<td>An Inception report</td>
<td>Should contain intervention logic of the programme (based on desk study), an evaluation plan, and a list of reviewed documents.</td>
<td>5 working days from the start of the contract</td>
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<td>A detailed proposed evaluation plan</td>
<td>Should contain proposed data collection methods and data sources to be used for addressing each evaluation question/dimension. It highly recommended to use an evaluation matrix (which connects questions to data collection methods/sources)</td>
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<td>A draft Evaluation Report</td>
<td>At the end of the field research, the assessment team will hold a workshop with the relevant ELA staff to discuss preliminary findings and conclusions of the assessment exercise.</td>
<td>To the Reference Group Committee not later than 13th November 2017 The Committee will review and provide comments to the evaluator in 7 days.</td>
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<td>To be submitted to the Evaluation Reference Group committee not later that 13th November 2017 The Committee will review and provide comments to the evaluator in 7 days.</td>
<td>To the Reference Group Committee not later than 13th November 2017. The committee will provide comments not later than 20th November 2017</td>
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<td>Final Evaluation report</td>
<td>The Team Leader will submit the final report, with the evaluator having addressed UNESCO’s comments as appropriate.</td>
<td>The final evaluation report will be submitted not later than 27th November 2017</td>
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<td>The final report should systematically assess the programme’s impact, offering factual support, analysis of activities and related results observed, and synthesis if all information received for purposes of conclusions and recommendations.</td>
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<td>The Assessment report should consist of:</td>
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<td>- Executive summary (not more than 3- 4 pages)</td>
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<td>- Table of content</td>
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<td>- UNESCO mission statement</td>
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<td>- Conclusions and recommendations</td>
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<td>- Annexes (including list of stakeholders consulted during the study, assessment Tore, maps, record of interviews and focus groups conducted, survey forms and aggregate findings, budgetary analysis, bibliography etc. )</td>
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**Follow up/Management responses**

A management response, including any las for incorporating recommendations into ELA programme, should be prepared not later than two months after the receipt of the final report.

**G. IMPACT ASSESSMENT ETHICS AND CONSIDERATIONS.**

The assessment will be guided by the following ethical rules/considerations:

- Openness- of information given, to the highest degree to all involved parties.
- Publicity/public access- to results when there are not special considerations against this
- Broad participation – the interested parties should be involved where relevant and possible
- Reliability and independence – the assessment should be conducted so that findings and conclusions are correct and trustworthy.

The impact assessment for ELA programme will further be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (UNEG 2008). The UNGE 2008 is available in http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100. And the impact assessment team must take measures to ensure compliance with the evaluator code of conduct (e.g. measures to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of their sources, provisions to collect and report data, particularly permissions needed to interview or obtain information about children and young people, provisions to store and maintain security of collected information; and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

H. **EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**:

Expression of interest should be forwarded to the UNESCO ki.consultant@unesco.org not later than 4th October 2017 (5:00pm, Kabul time). The final decision on the candidate will be taken by 13th October 2017. Field work should be planned for the period running from 23rd October 2017 to 30th November 2017.

The application should comprise of:

1. A detailed technical proposal and a budget
2. An updated copy of their CV including references and their contact details as well as two examples of recently completed evaluation reports.

All of the above three items must be submitted within one PDF document or else applications will not be considered for review.

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