department of internal oversight services

evaluation of the
unrwa education reform programme

march 2020
draft terms of reference

call for expressions of interest for an expert consultant

evaluation of the unrwa education reform programme

1 introduction

1. In 2011, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA, the Agency) education programme began the design and implementation of a major four-year reform. The Education Reform aimed to improve UNRWA’s education programme by changing classroom practices, the school environment and professional and administrative support structures. The Education Reform Strategy\(^1\) aimed to be more inclusive and adapted to the challenges of the 21st century, providing Palestine refugees with the means to develop to their full potential.

2. Considering the Reform’s dimension and the importance of education in the overall strategic framework of UNRWA, the Medium Term Strategy 2016–2021 highlighted the need for a comprehensive evaluation of its design, implementation and impact. Consequently, the Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS) will conduct an evaluation of the Education Reform as part of its evaluation work plan for 2020.

3. The timing of the evaluation is opportune, as its results will come at a time when the Agency will be looking forward and preparing its next Medium Term Strategy due in 2022. The evaluation should provide UNRWA with information on what outcomes the reform has contributed to, as well as insight into how and why the reform programme contributed to those outcomes. Conversely, it should provide insight into the challenges encountered and the circumstances that hindered achievement.

4. To this end, the UNRWA DIOS is seeking to retain an expert consultant in education programme evaluation to participate on the evaluation team. These terms of reference outline the evaluation context, a preliminary approach, and the parameters of the assignment.

2 background, context and programme/project objectives

5. UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. The Agency is the largest UN operation in the Middle East with more than 30,000 staff and is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a fair solution to their plight.

6. In line with the UN human development approach, UNRWA recognises that core human capabilities are influenced by education – as it provides people with the skills for cognitive emancipation, social interactions and participation in economic activities. Hence, education provision is the largest programme of UNRWA and plays a strategic part in fulfilling UNRWA’s mission.

7. Operationally, UNRWA runs 708 elementary and preparatory schools across its five fields of operation, providing free basic education for around half a million Palestine refugee children\(^2\); as well as eight secondary schools in Lebanon. In addition, vocational training and higher

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\(^1\) See Education Reform Strategy [https://www.unrwa.org/resources/strategy-policy/education-reform-strategy](https://www.unrwa.org/resources/strategy-policy/education-reform-strategy)

\(^2\) Annual Operational Report 2018, the total pupil enrolment was 532,857.
education is provided at eight vocational training centres for 7,500 Palestine refugees in all fields, and for 1,900 students in two educational science faculties (ESFs) teacher training institutes in the West Bank and Jordan.

8. In order to ensure that UNRWA continues to provide quality education, a comprehensive assessment of the education programme was undertaken in 2010, as part of the Organizational Development process. The study identified strengths and weaknesses in the education system, highlighted the lack of policies and frameworks, and emphasized the role of the Department of Education in fostering evidence-based strategic policies and directions for the UNRWA education programme. It stressed the importance of adopting inclusive education approaches that would identify and address the needs of all children.

9. Simultaneously, similar concerns could be noticed in other education systems in the Arab region and educational reform was presented as the main vehicle for achieving social, political, and economic development. However, despite the multitude of regional and national initiatives, the World Bank Middle East and North Africa development report (2008), the Arab Knowledge Report (2009), the United Nations Development Program Arab Human Development Report (2002), and the Arab World’s Education Report Card (2012) showed disappointing results of reform efforts in inducing social, political, and economic advancements.

10. Specifically, they pointed at the fact that the impact of the quality of learning of Arab students fell short of preparing them for the demands of the 21st century. This failure is mostly noted in the inability of these attempts to cause changes at the school and classroom level especially with regards to improving the quality of the classroom practices, the school climates, and consequently, the students’ learning achievements.

11. To address these challenges starting in 2011, the Education Department designed and implemented a major multi-year education reform in the Agency’s fields of operation through its Jordan, Gaza, Lebanon, West Bank and Syria fields of operation. The main goal of the Education Reform was to achieve an efficient, effective, inclusive, equitable and quality education programme, which ultimately could lead Palestine refugees to develop their full potential as social human beings.

12. The essential logic of the Education Reform was that transformation of teaching and learning required change at three integrated levels: policy defining a clear vision and framework for achieving goals; strategies and structures setting out the instruments and actions that would be carried out to achieve the goals; and capacity development of the actors involved in implementing the actions.

13. These three levels were addressed in eight work strands, mainly interrelated and targeting the following objectives:

- Professional, qualified and motivated teaching force and empowered schools in place;
- Equal access for all children to quality education regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, impairments, health conditions and socioeconomic status assured;

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6 According to the Education Reform Strategy, the development of the full potential of Palestine refugees "enable them to be confident, innovative, questioning, thoughtful, tolerant and open minded, upholding human values and religious tolerance, proud of their Palestinian identity, and contributing positively to the development of their society and the global community".
7 Although not provided in this draft terms of reference, a series of theories of change concerning the Reform Strategy were developed and approved by the Education Department in 2017. For the Education Reform Strategy visit https://www.unrwa.org/resources/strategy-policies/education-reform-strategy
• Strengthened curricula to support a holistic approach to learning and personal development;
• Relevant and quality Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) structures and programmes in place;
• Evidence-based policy making and informed decision-making at all levels in place;
• Effective educational governance system at all levels in place;
• Strengthened education programme planning management; and
• Partnerships, communication and use of education Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) strengthened.

14. The first three substantive strands - teacher professional development and school empowerment, inclusive education, and curriculum and assessment – aimed to contribute to the reform goal by transforming classrooms into inclusive environments for transformative learning.

15. The last four objectives were supporting functions aimed at strengthening the institutional structure for efficient service delivery. The rationale of the Reform pointed to results-based management and coherent policies as enablers of reform implementation and considered that educational changes required all relevant parts of the system to be addressed altogether at the same time.

16. According to the Reform Strategy, primary stakeholders are all learners participating in, and benefiting from, the UNRWA education programme, as well as those responsible for designing and implementing the Reform Strategy across the Agency (e.g. teachers, education support staff and the Department of Education). Complementary, secondary stakeholders are host authority representatives and donors.

3 evaluation purpose and objectives

17. The main purpose of the evaluation is to generate findings, lessons learned and recommendations regarding the relevance and coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, and sustainability of the UNRWA Education Reform programme.

18. The evaluation will include formative elements to support learning on what has been working and what has not, and the circumstances influencing achievement and the challenges hindering it. It is important to identify possible improvements to ensure the Education Reform is effectively embedded and sustained. Further, it is essential, for accountability purposes that the evaluation measure the results of the Education Reform in terms of the outcomes and impact that it has delivered for beneficiaries.

19. The evaluation aims to inform the next UNRWA Medium Term Strategy, due in 2022. DIOS will actively disseminate the evaluation report and will seek opportunities to present the results of the evaluation to the Agency’s partners as appropriate.

4 scope

20. The evaluation will cover the UNRWA Education Reform Strategy (2011-2016) and its implementation, addressing all Reform work strands (except TVET®). The period covered by this
evaluation is 2011-2020, which will capture the time from the design and implementation of the strategy until now.

21. Geographically, it will cover all fields of UNRWA operations. With regards to the Syria Field Office, despite it having implemented Reform activities, considering the current challenges faced by the UN system to deploy consultants to the region, its inclusion in the evaluation will be conditioned on the availability of visas and in consultation with the host government at the time of field-work. In any case, UNRWA documentation from Syria will be considered.

### 4.1 Key Evaluation Questions

22. The evaluation process will be guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) and will address the standard evaluation criteria of relevance and coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, and sustainability. Further, the evaluation will incorporate gender and human rights perspectives throughout the analysis. In order to evaluate the education reform against these criteria, the following key questions will be explored:

#### 4.2 Relevance and Coherence

- Were Reform objectives aligned to learners’ needs, considering personal / collective and local/regional/international needs and expectations?
- Were Reform initiatives consistent with UNRWA’s mandate and strategic framework as well as the policies and strategies of host governments, bilateral donors, and relevant global frameworks concerning SDG 4?

#### 4.3 Efficiency

- How cost-efficient has the reform programme been implemented (considering costs, time and work required)?
- How adequately defined and appropriate were reform monitoring, results reporting and learning processes?

#### 4.4 Effectiveness and Impact

- What specific outcomes can be linked to the Reform across the seven programmatic areas?
- How did Reform components interact with one another and how did each of them contribute to the outcomes?

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11 https://en.unesco.org/themes/education2030-sdg4
12 According to the strategic documents in place when of the Reform development and implementation, i.e. Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015 and Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021.
• What were the major internal/external factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
• To what extent did fields and the Department adapt the Reform implementation to accommodate context changes and provide an enabling environment for initiatives?

4.5 sustainability

[Concerns with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.]
• Has the education programme internalized the proposed teaching and managing practices?
• What are the major factors influencing the sustainability of the Reform outputs and outcomes?

4.6 gender and human rights

• Has the Reform contributed to inclusive education, addressing issues of gender, disability and vulnerability?

5 evaluation approach and methodology

23. The evaluation team will be composed of a DIOS Evaluation Officer, as the team leader, and external expert consultants. At this time, DIOS is searching for one expert consultant to contribute specific expertise in education programme evaluation to support in the technical quality of the evaluation design, data collection and analysis. This consultant will contribute to the validation of the theories of change, the design and implementation of the evaluation approach, methods, data collection and analysis, and to writing parts of the evaluation report.

24. The final requirements for expert consultants, and the distribution of roles and responsibilities of the team members will be further specified in an inception note.

25. The overall approach to the evaluation will be as rigorous, transparent and consultative as possible within the time and resources available. An evaluation reference group (ERG) will be set up to accompany the evaluation process and provide feedback on a final terms of reference/inception report, and the various evaluation deliverables. The ERG will include representatives of DIOS, the Education programme, the UNRWA Department of Planning, fields of operation and the evaluation office of UNESCO.

26. The following methods and data sources are likely to be used to inform the evaluation:

• Review of Education Reform programme documents and related operational processes: Desk and literature reviews will explore all relevant documentation including the strategy, policies and procedures related to the Reform implementation, including guidance documents, resources and financial information, monitoring documents and reports, programme research and review reports, and other relevant internal documentation. Relevant external documentation will also be consulted where appropriate and available.

• Stakeholder consultations, focus groups and observation: One-to-one and group interviews will be held with internal and external stakeholders, including UNRWA students and education

13 Theories of change for each strand of the reform have been drafted and reviewed by the UNRWA Education Department.
staff across the fields of operation\textsuperscript{14}. Semi-structured observations of education programme practices may also provide qualitative data to inform the evaluation.

- **Process reviews**: Process reviews may be undertaken to assess the efficiency of the administration, coordination and progress monitoring of reform activities. These reviews will involve detailed analysis of the existing Education Reform manuals, guidance and procedures, closely supported by discussions with staff.

- **Impact assessments, including secondary data analysis**: Using primary qualitative data and secondary quantitative information from UNRWA education programme studies and the UNRWA Education Information Management System (EMIS\textsuperscript{15}), impact assessments will aim to identify general outcomes delivered through the Reform programme (e.g. learning outcomes, equal access/inclusion of vulnerable student populations) and specific outcomes delivered through the various Reform streams (e.g. strengthened curricula, teacher professional development). Secondary data analysis should include, but may not be limited to, a review of student performance across education context: UNRWA quadrennial Monitoring Learning Achievement studies (MLA)\textsuperscript{16} and Education Perception Surveys\textsuperscript{17}; National education performance exams\textsuperscript{18}; Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)\textsuperscript{19}; Education for All National Assessments\textsuperscript{20};

- **Online surveys**: Surveys may be used to reach a wider audience than possible through interviews, targeted at both internal stakeholders (e.g. Education staff) and external stakeholders (e.g. students, parents).

- **Benchmarking**: This will help to inform the evaluation by benchmarking the Agency’s programme to comparators and should include host government education systems information. The benchmarking should include, but not be limited to, a comparison of resources, budget, student learning outcomes, teacher and principal professional development programmes.

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\textsuperscript{14}Considering the current difficulties to reach the Syrian Field and provided the access of consultants might not be possible during the evaluation period, the team may resort to online data collection methods in this field (e.g. synchronous and asynchronous online services) whenever existing secondary data does not suffice.

\textsuperscript{15}The Education Management Information System (EMIS) can provide various data on pupils enrolment, attendance, involvement in extracurricular activities, disability if relevant, as well as information on school buildings.

\textsuperscript{16}Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) survey is a multi-year, Agency-wide initiative of the Department of Education to track levels of student achievement (grades 4 and 8) in key performance areas (math, science and language). A largescale baseline study was conducted in 2009, smaller repeat studies were carried-out in 2011 and 2013, and a large-scale study was implemented in 2015 to assess changes in performance levels and to provide feedback on the quality enhancement strategies implemented during this time. The MLA assessment is also scheduled to take place in May 2020, with results analysis by Education taking place during the evaluation conduct phase. The MLA looks not only at students’ academic achievements with regard to mean scores but also at performance in cognitive domains, higher order thinking skills and overall equity of student learning outcomes. Through the questionnaire, the MLA also looks at classroom practices, school environments and reform progress in general.

\textsuperscript{17}The Education programme implements a perception survey every four years to gather views from students, parents, teachers, head teachers and other key UNRWA staff on practices, policies and school experiences. A survey was completed in 2014 and will also be done in 2020. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/perceptional_survey_report_english.pdf

\textsuperscript{18}Conducted by the Palestinian Authorities and the Jordanian Government biannually (since 2008) with students from 4th and 8th grades. These exams cover the subjects of math, science and language and provide disaggregated results at a school level (differentiating between government, UNRWA and private schools). Such evaluations also provide contextual data on the students and schools being assessed. The Tawjih, a general secondary examination held in Jordan and the oPt can also provide data on student knowledge at the end of secondary education.

\textsuperscript{19}Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) was conducted every four years with 8th grade students in Jordan and Lebanon since 2003. Provided that results can be disaggregated between UNRWA and government schools, TIMSS offers information on student achievement, as well as a rich array of information about the students’ backgrounds and their attitudes toward mathematics and science, teachers’ education and training, classroom characteristics and activities, and school contexts for learning and instruction in mathematics and science.

\textsuperscript{20}Education for All National Assessments 2000-2015 were conducted by Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and Jordan in a joint initiative with UNICEF. The EFA National Assessments report on progress towards the EFA goals and strategies.
6 Evaluation team composition and consultancy requirements

27. As noted earlier, the evaluation team will be composed of a DIOS Evaluation Officer, a senior external expert, and one to two additional external consultants as required. Currently, UNRWA is seeking expressions of interest for an evaluation consultant with expertise in education programme analysis, and given the specific technical nature of the evaluation the following qualifications:

**Required qualifications:**

- Strong knowledge and experience in the evaluation of education systems (demonstrated with examples of previous evaluation, research, publication, etc. on the subject area), with a minimum of seven years of work experience in evaluation, including in the area of education;

- Knowledge of and experience in applying qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques and results based management principles in the assessment of education programme elements, ideally across an area related to education reform, teacher professional development, inclusive education, educational leadership, and/or leadership of educational change;

- No previous involvement in the UNWRA education programme;

- University degree at the Masters level or equivalent in education, social sciences or another field of relevance; and

- Excellent analytical skills and demonstrated drafting skills in English.

**Desired qualifications:**

- Work experience in the MENA region;

- Experience in education ministries, school systems, schools and in their evaluation;

- Familiarity with UNRWA and its education programme;

- Understanding and knowledge of the UN mandates in relation to human rights and gender equality issues;

- Command of Arabic would be an asset; and

- Understanding of the context of Palestine refugees is an asset.

28. The evaluation team will be expected to travel to several of UNRWA’s fields of operation (Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank). As a result, the consultant should be able to travel to most of these locations. With the exception of flights, UNRWA will facilitate travel and visa arrangements and will provide for local security arrangements, as provided for UNRWA staff members.
7 schedule and key deliverables

7.1 schedule

29. The external expert is expected to take an active role throughout the planning, conduct and reporting phases of the evaluation, working approximately 70 days.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity / deliverable</th>
<th>timing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of consultant</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>preparatory desk review, stakeholder consultations, and inception report</td>
<td>April – May 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>data collection and analysis, including field missions</td>
<td>May – September 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>data analysis and development of findings</td>
<td>October - November 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>presentation of preliminary findings</td>
<td>December 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of draft report</td>
<td>January 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commenting on draft report</td>
<td>February 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report finalization</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
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7.2 deliverables

- Inception report: The team will produce an inception report to elaborate on a final ToR and a detailed methodology for the data collection and analysis.
- Data collection: The team will use a number of evaluation tools, including but not limited to, interviews with programme stakeholders, direct observation, and the use of secondary data to analyze learning outcomes and student inclusion. Data collection and analysis activities will be conducted independently and provide sufficient evidence so that statements can be made on the results by field, by gender, and by refugees inside and outside camps.
- Draft report: The draft report will follow the UNRWA outline for reports and all findings and recommendations will be based on solid evidence.
- Draft final report: The draft final report is the final deliverable and will have addressed all comments made by stakeholders on the draft report. For comments rejected a valid reason will be given in the comments matrix.

8 proposal/application submission

30. Applicants should submit: i) a cover letter demonstrating clearly the knowledge and experiences relevant to the evaluation and planned research activities; ii) a CV; iii) proof of competencies required including relevant samples of work; vi) information on availability over the evaluation period and an expected daily rate for the consultancy services (excluding travel expenses).

31. Please submit this as one package to consultancy@unrwa.org indicating the title of this consultancy, “Evaluation Consultant – Evaluation of Education Reform.” The deadline for
submission of applications is Saturday, 21 March. UNRWA is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from both women and men. UNRWA encourages applications from qualified and experienced female candidates. Only those applicants short-listed for interview will be contacted. UNRWA is a non-smoking environment.