**Terms of Reference**

**for consulting services to verify compliance of rehabilitated schools with minimum operating standards for receiving schools**

**1. Background information on the project**

Moldova Education Reform Project (MERP) is a World Bank-financed Project to be implemented, between April 2013 and April 2022.

The total cost of original credit is SDR 26.1 million (US$ 40 million equivalent). The Additional Financing (AF) in the amount of SDR 7.1 million (US$ 10 million equivalent) is provided to the Republic of Moldova in support of Moldova Education Reform Project.

The MERP supports the Government of Moldova (GoM) reform program by financing activities that will strengthen the quality of education and lead to a more efficient education sector. Through this Project, the World Bank supports the GoM in implementing the needed reforms, which include initiatives for:

* Improving learning conditions in targeted schools;
* Strengthening the education monitoring systems;
* Promoting efficiency reforms in the education sector.

MERP’s focus is to support interventions that would lead to improvements in the quality and efficiency of primary and general secondary education. Specifically, the AF would allow the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR) to expand the coverage and depth of selected activities already initiated under MERP, such as teacher and school managers’ training, participation in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and development of an additional module to Education Management Information System (Technical and Vocational Education Training module) and roll-out of the preschool module.

The objective of the Project is to improve learning conditions in targeted schools and strengthen the Recipient’s education monitoring systems, while promoting efficiency reforms in the education sector.

The MERP has three components:

1. “Strengthening the Quality of Education”,
2. “Improving the Efficiency of the Education Sector”
3. “Improving the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research’s Capacity to Monitor the Reform”.

Component A is divided into three sub-components: A.1, A.2 and A.3.

The objective of component A.1 is to contribute to the strengthening of the quality of education in the General Education subsector by improving systems in the following areas: school standards, teacher and school director training, student assessments, and data collection.

The objective of component A.2 is to contribute to the strengthening of the quality of education in the General Education subsector by rehabilitating and upgrading 17 receiving schools. The activities under component A.2 are carried out by the Moldova Social Investment Fund (MSIF).

In total, 23 schools are rehabilitated under MERP: 17 of them financed by the Project (activities carried out by MSIF) and 6 of them financed by the national budget (activities carried out by MoECR);

The objective of sub-component A.3 is to contribute to the strengthening of the quality of education.

Component A consists of activities to support implementation of minimum quality standards for primary and general secondary schools. The Quality Standards represent general declarations, guidelines and characteristics relating to school activities intended to ensure a child-friendly environment and a level of education adequate for the child’s comfortable psychological and physical development. They cover all aspects concerning the functioning of a school, including management, institutional capacity, and curriculum/educational process. The Quality Standards were approved by the Minister of Education’s Order no. 970 dated October 11, 2013. Based on these quality standards, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research defined “minimum operating standards” consisting of a set of measurable indicators that each school needs to meet to be considered compliant with the quality standards. These “minimum operating standards” are presented as a checklist of objective, measurable, and verifiable indicators for assessing short-term progress in meeting quality standards. Minimum operating standards were approved by the MoECR’s Order no 61 dated February 10, 2015. The minimum operating standards are structured around five dimensions: *(i) school organization; (ii) teaching and learning; (iii) school infrastructure and equipment (including IT equipment); (iv) curriculum and evaluation; and (v) school governance, certification and values*. The Annex 1 to this ToR presents the Minimum operating standards for receiving schools.

In this context, the MoECR intends to hire a firm to verify whether 23 schools rehabilitated under MERP meet the infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards.

**2. Objective of the assignment**

The objective of the assignment is to verify the compliance of 23 rehabilitated schools with infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards (see Annex 1 to this Order).

**3. Scope of work**

In order to achieve the objective, the Firm shall perform the following tasks:

**Task 1**. Develop the Methodology and Action Plan for verification of compliance of rehabilitated schools with infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards.

The Methodology will include activities and tools that allow measuring the Project indicator whether the rehabilitated schools meet the infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards. The Methodology will be based on the Minimum operating standards mentioned above.

The action plan will describe the timetable for the core activities that should be implemented to achieve the mission objective.

**Task 2.** Conduct assessment in rehabilitated schools, based on the Methodology and the action plan, approved by the MoECR.

**Task 3**. Develop the final report on the results of compliance of 23 rehabilitated schools with infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards. The final report will include: conclusions on the degree of compliance of the renovated infrastructure with the minimum operating standards for each school and, where appropriate, the necessary recommendations for the school administration and public authorities.

**4. Deliverables and due dates**

This consultancy is expected to start in September 2021, with the deliverables submitted as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Deliverables | Submission Deadline | Approval by |
| 1. The inception report that includes the Methodology and action plan for verification of compliance of rehabilitated schools with infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards. | 3 weeks from starting the contract | Ministry of Education, Culture and Research |
| 1. The final report on the results of compliance of 23 rehabilitated schools with infrastructure requirements under minimum operating standards. | 18 weeks from starting the contract | Ministry of Education, Culture and Research |

The inception report shall be developed in Romanian and shall be submitted electronically (MS Office) and in hard-copy. The final report shall be developed in both Romanian and English languages and shall be submitted electronically (MS Office) and in hard-copy.

**5. Qualification requirements and basis for evaluation (evaluation criteria)**

The Firm should meet the following minimum requirements**:**

1. *General experience* *(30 points):*

* At least 3 years of experience in conducting assessments on compliance with construction norms/standards;
* Experience in conducting assessments on infrastructure in the educational sector would be an advantage.

1. *Specific experience* *(30 points):*

* Experience in analysis of collected data and drafting assessment reports with conclusions and recommendations on infrastructure improvement;
* Experience in at least two similar assignments would be an asset.

1. *Professional experience of key personnel (40 points):*

The Consultant team will include at least 3 (three) key members: a team leader and two high qualified experts with extensive experience in verification of construction works execution (certified specialists). CVs will be included as part of the Expressions of Interest.

**Qualification of the Team leader:**

* Higher education in architecture or construction;
* At least 5 years of experience in the area of architecture or constructions;
* Proven experience in leading work teams (planning and implementation activities, division of responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation);
* Professional experience in the area of conducting assessments on compliance with construction norms/standards in at least 2 similar assignments;
* Experience in analysis of collected data and drafting assessment reports with conclusions and recommendations on infrastructure improvement;
* Previous experience in conducting assessments on infrastructure in the education sector would be an advantage;
* Excellent technical writing skills in Romanian; good knowledge of English language;
* Experience with Microsoft Office package (Word, Excel, etc.).

**Qualification of the key experts (minimum of two experts):**

* Higher education in the area of architecture or constructions;
* Expertise in verification of construction works execution (certified technical responsible specialists);
* Experience in conducting assessments on compliance of rehabilitated facilities with construction norms/standards in at least 2 similar assignments;
* Proficiency in Romanian for the purpose of assignment.

**6. Institutional arrangements**

The Firm will report to the Project Executive Director and MERP Project Coordinator. The MERP team will oversee the process of consulting services and will support the General Education Division in the process of analysing the deliverables provided by the firm.

The MoECR will provide the Firm with all Project documents deemed necessary for assignment accomplishment.

**Confidentiality statement:** All data and information received from MoECR for the purpose of this assignment is to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned to MoECR. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of the MoECR.

***Annex 1 to MoECR’s Order nr.61***

***dated February 10, 2015***

**MOLDOVA EDUCATION REFORM PROJECT**

**Quality Assurance Standards for Receiving Schools**

1. **Introduction**

This report outlines the *School Quality Assurance Standards* for receiving schools (hereinafter – minimum standards), and their role in the wider system of quality assurance in Moldovan schools. The School Quality Assurance Standards consist of an implementable and measurable subset of the government approved *Quality Standards for Primary and General Secondary Schools from a Child-Friendly Perspective*, and is closely related to other quality assurance tools and mechanisms that are currently being developed and introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoEd). Further, meeting such minimum operating standards is a pre-condition for MoEd to achieve a set of disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) under the World Bank-funded Moldova Education Reform Project (MERP).

1. **Background and context**

The MoEd has embarked on a complex reform of the quality assurance system in education. The reform includes, among other policies, establishing standards for schools, managers, and teachers; developing the institutional framework for quality assurance, most notably establishing the National School Inspectorate; carrying out a review of the national curriculum; overhauling the teacher training system; and improving the accuracy of national assessments, in particular the Baccalaureate exams.

In 2013, the Institute of Educational Sciences, with the support of UNICEF, developed the *Quality Standards for Primary and General Secondary Schools from a Child-Friendly Perspective* (hereinafter – Quality Standards). The Quality Standards represent general declarations, guidelines and characteristics relating to school activities intended to ensure a child-friendly environment and a level of education adequate for the child’s comfortable psychological and physical development. They cover all aspects concerning the functioning of a school, including management, institutional capacity, and curriculum/educational process. The Quality Standards are structured around five dimensions that result from the ‘child-friendly school’ concept: 1) health, safety, and protection; 2) democratic participation; 3) inclusion; 4) educational efficiency; and 5) gender issues. The Quality Standards were approved by Order of the Minister of Education nr. 970 from 11 October 2013.

The implementation of Quality Standards in education is a medium to long term process, which requires further detailing of requirements for achieving the standards, training of teachers, managers, parents, and other stakeholders in education, as well as a functional institutional framework for their implementation. Even though implementation of Quality Standards is a long process and expected to take years to materialise, the MoEd has already begun its efforts toward that end. As a first step, the MoEd contracted an international consultant to “translate” the Quality Standards into an implementable and measurable instrument, with concrete interventions and measurable evaluation criteria. The consultant has worked closely with the Institute of Educational Sciences and other relevant stakeholders, and in mid-2013 produced a final report, which includes:

* A conceptual framework for quality assurance in schools;
* A shortlist of measurable standards/criteria derived from the Quality Standards, to be used for the purpose of assessing the accomplishment of MERP DLIs;
* A costed plan for the implementation and evaluation of the shortlist, including criteria for selecting an independent evaluation company; and
* Instruments for the self-assessment and third-party evaluation of the achievement of the shortlist of standards/criteria.

Considering the above, the MoEd further developed the instrument, identifying the ‘minimum operating standards for receiving schools’ to be achieved in the short-term. The ‘minimum operating standards’ consist of a sub-set of Quality Standards and are considered to be those minimally required for schools to be functioning according to recently approved quality education policies[[1]](#footnote-1); they are defined and structured in a way that responds to MoEd’s needs and requirements, and allow for implementation oversight.

1. **Minimum Operating Standards**

These minimum operating standards are presented as a checklist of objective, measurable, and verifiable indicators for assessing short-term progress in improving quality of education.

| **Operating Standard** | **Means of verification** | **Associated Quality Standard**  (as per the Order of the Minister of Education nr. 970 from 11.10.2013) | **Comments** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimension 1: School organisation** | | |  |
| 1. The school has all authorisations and licenses required by law for all school buildings, including cafeteria. | Legal documents and authorisations | Standard 1.1: The school ensures the health and safety of all students (indicators 1.1.1 and 1.1.4)  Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.6) | Construction norms NCM C01.03-2000 Nr. 4.1 and Sanitary and Epidemiology Regulation.  Legal documents and authorisations are considered those required by the legal framework at the day of verification. |
| 1. The school budget is balanced[[2]](#footnote-2) | School budget and spending documents provided by the Rayon Council budget department or Local Treasury where the school has accounts. | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.9) | The new Regulation on per capita financing approved by Government Decision nr.868 dated October 8, 2014. |
| 1. Students from other localities are safely transported to the school, in accordance with the relevant legal framework. | School documents, observation (e.g. existence of school buses, transportation of children) | Standard 1.1: The school ensures the health and safety of all students (indicator 1.1.5) | The new Regulation on school transportation approved by Government Decision nr. 903 dated October 30, 2014. |
| 1. The school collects and updates data on-line for the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and has at least one computer connected to the Internet dedicated to school management. | EMIS documents | Standard 3.1: The school includes all children, regardless of nationality, gender, social origin, political or religious views, or health status, and creates optimal conditions for developing their potential within the education process (indicator 3.1.7) |  |
| **Dimension 2: Teaching and learning** | | |  |
| 1. Qualified teachers are available for all mandatory subjects according to the national curriculum and framework education plan and for all optional subjects set at the school level. | School documents about the teaching staff qualifications. | Standard 4.2: Teachers use educational resources to the end of reaching the educational outcomes established by the national curriculum (indicator 4.2.3) | A teacher is considered qualified if he/she has the degrees/training required by law for him/her to teach a certain subject.  The school director is responsible for school staff allocation. |
| 1. The school provides psychological and pedagogical assistance and has support-teachers for the inclusion of students with special needs as necessary. | Individualised educational plans, interviews with representatives of local psychological and pedagogical assistance services | Standard 3.1: The school includes all children, regardless of nationality, gender, social origin, political or religious views, or health status, and creates optimal conditions for developing their potential within the education process (indicator 3.1.2) | As a definition special educational needs – *the educational needs of children/ pupils/ students, who require schooling conditions adjusted to the individual peculiarities or characteristics of the learning disability or disorder, as well as a specific intervention through an appropriate rehabilitation or recovery actions.* (Education Code, Law 152 dated July 17, 2014 |
| 1. At least 1/3 of the teachers of the institution participated in a continuous training program for teachers in the last 3 years. | Training certificates; teacher’s annual evaluation scorecards | Standard 4.1 The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process. (indicator 4.1.8.) | Training courses can be considered independent of the institution's budget. School may use all training opportunities |
| **Dimension 3: School infrastructure and equipment (including IT equipment)** | | |  |
| 1. Educational activities are carried out in well-equipped and appropriate spaces:    1. Classrooms    2. Laboratories for physics, chemistry, biology    3. Computer rooms    4. Sport facilities    5. Library | School documents, observation | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.6)  *Also:* Construction norms NCM C01.03-2000 Nr. 5.4 and 5.5 |  |
| 1. The school facility is accessible for children with special educational needs (in particular access ramps and accessible bathrooms). | Observation | Standard 3.3: The school provides a safe and favourable environment for all students (indicator 3.3.6)  *Also:* Construction norms NCM C01.03-2000 Nr. 8.15 |  |
| 1. School buildings, including canteens/ cafeteria, have functioning systems for water and sewage, indoor toilets, electric and thermal energy provision, and telecommunication, in accordance with the national construction norms. | Observation | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.6)  *Also:* Construction norms NCM C01.03-2000 Nr. 8.1-8.6 |  |
| 1. Furniture in classrooms and other spaces intended for school activities is adequate and safe. | Observation | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.6)  *Also:* Construction norms NCM C01.03-2000 Nr. 7.17 |  |
| 1. The school has a computer room with at least 11 computers connected to the Internet dedicated to the use of students. | School documents, observation | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.7)  Standard 4.2: Teachers use educational resources to the end of reaching the educational outcomes established by the national curriculum (indicator 4.2.8) |  |
| **Dimension 4: Curriculum and evaluation** | | |  |
| 1. The school has access to all relevant curricular documents, in particular the Framework Educational Plan, methodological letters, curricula for each subject, and textbooks. | School documents, observation | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.7) | The MoE publishes yearly the relevant documents on its web page |
| 1. The school applies a curriculum (subject structure and number of allocated hours), which corresponds to legal norms on the Framework Educational Plan for the respective school year. | School documents, observation | Standard 4.1: The school creates the necessary conditions for a quality education process (indicator 4.1.10) | The school documents will be checked against the Framework Educational Plan |
| 1. The school applies an individualised educational plan for teaching students with special educational needs, in accordance with the recommendations of the psychological and pedagogical assistance service. | School documents: individualised educational plan for each student with special needs | Standard 3.1: The school includes all children, regardless of nationality, gender, social origin, political or religious views, or health status, and creates optimal conditions for developing their potential within the education process (indicator 3.1.14) |  |
| **Dimension 5: School governance, certification, and values** | | |  |
| 1. The school has a functioning administration council, which comprises representatives of the teachers, parents, students, and local public administration. | School documents, interviews with members of the administration council, observation (if relevant) | Standard 2.1: Students participate in the decision-making process regarding all aspects of school life (indicators 2.1.3 and 2.1.5)  Standard 2.2: The school communicates with and involves the family and the community in the decision-making process (indicator 2.2.6)  Standard 2.3: The school, family, and community prepare students for living in an intercultural society based on democracy | The composition and duties of the school administration council are laid out in the Education Code and the framework regulation for organization and functioning of administration councils in general education institutions |
| 1. The school knows and applies the existing procedures and mechanisms for preventing, identifying, reporting, and resolving cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking of children. | School documents, interview with nominated school coordinator on violence issues, observation (e.g. existence of complaints box) | Standard 1.2: The school fosters community partnerships to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of all students | The relevant procedures and mechanisms that can be used in verification are described in Order no.77 dated February 02, 2013 |
| 1. The school maintains at least one functional mean of public communication, such as information board, website, public information system or school media, which publishes the school report card and other relevant information for students, parents, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders. | School documents, observation | Standard 2.2: The school communicates with and involves the family and the community in the decision-making process (indicator 2.2.8)  Standard 2.1: Students participate in the decision-making process regarding all aspects of school life (indicators 2.1.2 and 2.1.4) | The Education Code provides a number of requirements regarding information and transparency, such as publication of school budgets |

**NOTE: A school is considered to have met the minimum operating standards if it receives a score of 18 (100% completion).**

Annex 2. List of schools rehabilitated under MERP

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Rayon | Locality | School name |
| Schools rehabilitated by MSIF under MERP | | | |
| 1 | Cimislia | Cimislia Town | Mihai Eminescu Lyceum |
| 2 | Ungheni | Ungheni Town | Alexandru Puskin Lyceum |
| 3 | Orhei | Orhei Town | Ion Luca Caragiale Lyceum |
| 4 | Glodeni | Glodeni Town | Vasile Coroban Lyceum |
| 5 | Telenesti | Telenesti Town | Mihai Eminescu Lyceum |
| 6 | Anenii Noi | Anenii Noi Town | Mihai Eminescu Lyceum |
| 7 | Straseni | Strașeni Town | Mihai Eminescu Lyceum |
| 8 | Singerei | Pepeni village | Alexandru Agapie Lyceum |
| 9 | Vulcanesti | Vulcanesti Town | Axentii Doljnenco Lyceum |
| 10 | Ialoveni | Ialoveni Town | Andrei Vartic Lyceum |
| 11 | Soroca | Soroca Town | Petru Rares Lyceum |
| 12 | Hincesti | Carpineni Village | Stefan Holban Lyceum |
| 13 | Cahul | Colibasi Village | Vasile Alecsandri Lyceum |
| 14 | Stefan Voda | Stefan Voda Town | Stefan Voda Lyceum |
| 15 | Rezina | Rezina Town | Alexandru cel Bun Lyceum |
| 16 | Straseni | Cojusna village | Alecu Russo Lyceum |
| 17 | Ialoveni | Rezeni community | Ion Pelivan Lyceum |
| Schools rehabilitated by MoECR with Government financing | | | |
| 1 | Nisporeni | Varzaresti Village | Alexandru cel Bun Gymnasium |
| 2 | Cantemir | Gotesti Village | Vasile Pirvan Lyceum |
| 3 | Calarasi | Sipoteni Village | Mihai Eminescu Lyceum |
| 4 | Leova | Iargara Town | Lucian Blaga Lyceum |
| 5 | Riscani | Costesti Town | Silvian Lucaci Lyceum |
| 6 | Causeni | Salcuta Village | Mesterul Manole Lyceum |

1. In addition to the work on defining the Quality Standards and associated processes, the MoEd has been making advances on a range of regulations, policies, and projects intended to improve quality of education and thus connected to the implementation of standards. The Parliament approved a new Education Code, which includes numerous provisions on school governance and management. In addition, the MoEd has been carrying out a curriculum review, developing the Education Management Information System (EMIS), supplying schools with equipment, including furniture and computers, and designing processes for rehabilitation of school infrastructure. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The budget can be balanced from the ‘rayon component’ of financing or extra-budgetary funds. The budget includes allocations for students from mixed or bilingual schools, as well as allocations for students with special education needs, in accordance with the Regulation on per capita financing and the Framework Education Plan (Government Decision nr. 868 dated October 8, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)