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Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Non-Key Expert to support on the level of quality assurance for school rehabilitation.

The Project:	TA to MEHE – Technical Assistant to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education
Financing Institution and contracts number:	European Commission: NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2022/ 440-883
Expert Category:	School Rehabilitation Quality Assurance Expert
Duration of the mission:	Up to 70 Working days
Period of the mission:	From 01/12/2023 to 15/12/2024
Working Language:	English and Arabic

1 Project Background

1.1 The situation

Lebanon has been suffering from instability on all levels for decades, but the situation has further aggravated in the last few years. Three years of layering of crises on top of one another - the economic crisis, compounded by COVID-19, the 2020 Beirut Port explosions and political instability have left all families residing in the country struggling to survive. Currently, Lebanon finds itself in a never before faced compounded crisis of extreme complexity, which was the result of several factors including the refugee crisis that started in 2011, noting that country is currently hosting 831,053 Syrian refugees¹ and 479,537 Palestinian refugees² according to latest UN agencies reports, in addition to the economic vulnerability and contraction, continuous political crisis, social unrest and heightened challenges since October 2019, the on-going debt crisis, COVID-19 and health crisis, banking and currency crisis, cumulative inflation rate, education sector crisis, which was preceded by teachers' protests since 2017-2018 against low remuneration and the Beirut Blast in August 2020 and its on-going consequences. All these crises resulted in enormous strains on population's physical and mental health, access to food, basic services, education, and safety among others.

1.2 Current situation in the target sector

The events that took place in the last few years have added further layers of obstacles on top of an already compromised Lebanese public and private schooling system in its efforts to provide education for children residing in Lebanon. The crisis left an impact on the different levels of the education system, starting with MEHE's inability to perform normally due to the economic and social situation, teachers and staff's losing motivation and students unable to attend classes on daily bases for several reasons among many other levels. The crisis' impact on the educational sector affects children's wellbeing and threatens their future, the social stability (including people's ability to escape the vicious cycle of poverty) and country's abilities to overcome the socioeconomic and political depression and to set up a sustainable governance and economic model. The below provides a detailed insight on the current situation in the education sector in Lebanon and sheds the light on major gaps and existing issues:

- Access to education opportunities and disruption of education services
- Quality of education services
- Governance of education systems

¹ UNHRC, 30 June 2022

² UNRWA in figures, UNRWA, 31 December 2020

- Education-related expenditures for families and MEHE
- Large donor group involved in the sector.
- MEHE needs and gaps.
- Budgeting and Planning
- Capacity Gaps
- “Internal Politics”

1.3 About the project

With the country slipping deeper into an economic and financial crisis, the education sector and the Ministry Education and Higher Education (MEHE) are in high need of support to ensure their ability to sustain their operations and remain able to deliver high quality education to all children residing in Lebanon. While the complexity of the situation is increasing, with high number of dropouts and out-of-school children, a significant number of students migrating from private to the public school because they cannot afford the high fees anymore, low teachers’ motivation, challenges on the level of transportation and unavailability of basic needs at schools such as power, in addition to a considerable decline in the quality of education, support is needed to ensure that MEHE, including Directorate for General Education (DGE) and all other departments, guarantee learning continuity under a multiple crisis context through a more resilient education system, that is able to provide quality, inclusive and safe education for all children.

To cover the existing gaps, the Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (TA to MEHE), aims at “building an education system (Ministry for Education and Higher Education) better equipped and able to deliver quality basic education”, through the below 3 outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** enhance the governance capacities of the MEHE in the field of strategic and operational planning, monitoring, and reporting, budgeting, and public finance management.
- **Outcome 2:** enhance the capacities of the MEHE for the delivery of quality teaching and learning by management and educational staff empowered with 21st century skills development.
- **Outcome 3:** enhance the performance of the public education system (MEHE) through improved management and business operating procedures.

2 The assignment

2.1 Background for the assignment

UNICEF has overseen the rehabilitation of approximately 60 public schools in Lebanon, as part of an initiative to enhance the teaching and learning environment. This project has been carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's engineering department and is financially supported by the European Union. Within this technical assistance framework, the EU is seeking a School Rehabilitation Quality Assurance Expert to oversee these rehabilitation efforts, ensuring that they meet the minimum safety and quality standards required.

2.2 Description of the assignment

2.2.1 Outline of the mission

The role of the School Rehabilitation Quality Assurance Expert is to oversee and ensure the effective and high-quality renovation or refurbishment of schools. This entails a dedicated focus on creating safe, suitable, and optimal learning environments. The expert is responsible for the oversight, evaluation, and enforcement of standards related to safety, quality, and regulatory compliance within the rehabilitation project, ultimately resulting in the enhancement of the educational environment.

2.2.2 Description of the activities to be performed by the NKE:

The expert works under the direct supervision of the Technical Assistance Team Leader and the DG. S/He is expected to perform the below activities:

- Conduct regular and systematic inspections of school rehabilitation projects to confirm their alignment with design specifications, safety standards, and quality requirements.
- Identify and meticulously document any construction defects or deviations from project plans.
- Verify that all facets of the rehabilitation work, encompassing structural integrity, electrical, plumbing, HVAC systems, and finishes, adhere to the specified standards.
- Collaborate closely with engineering department at MEHE to promptly address quality issues and deviations.
- Ensure strict adherence to quality control procedures, including the use of approved materials and construction techniques.
- Enforce safety regulations and protocols throughout construction to safeguard the well-being of workers and occupants.
- Conduct thorough inspections to identify potential safety hazards and work with project teams to implement necessary corrective actions.
- Maintain comprehensive records detailing inspections, findings, and actions taken to rectify any issues.
- Produce comprehensive reports outlining project status, progress, identified deficiencies, and recommended enhancements.
- Effectively communicate inspection results to Team Leader and DG.
- Conduct quality check on selected suppliers when necessary.
- Assist in the preparation of relevant tender documents, including requests for proposals (RFPs) and invitations to bid (ITBs).
- Collaborate with various stakeholders to address different procurement issues.
- Support in the evaluation of bids and support in cost controls when necessary and asked.
- Ensure the compliance of procurement with applicable laws and regulations.
- Support in monitoring supplier/contractor performance when necessary.
- Provide constructive feedback and recommendations for refining construction processes, promoting sustainability, and ensuring the long-term durability of school facilities.
- Advise on how rehabilitation can be enhanced to create an improved teaching and learning environment.
- Afford expertise and guidance on procurement best practices to the relevant team when necessary.
- Assist in developing and implementing procurement strategies and plans for relevant rehabilitation, renovation and construction works.
- Perform any other relevant duties as requested by the DG and the TL.

2.2.3 Outputs/Results of the mission

- Verification of compliance with design specifications, safety standards, and quality requirements.
- Identification and documentation of construction defects and deviations.
- Assurance that all aspects of the rehabilitation project meet prescribed quality standards.
- Recommendation on prompt and timely resolution of quality issues to prevent delays
- Enforcement of quality control processes and materials.
- Compliance with safety regulations and protocols to protect workers and occupants.

- Identification and mitigation of potential safety hazards.
- Maintenance of detailed inspection records.
- Generation of progress reports for informed decision-making.
- Provision of feedback and recommendations for process improvement.

2.2.4 Administrative Deliverables

- Monthly Time Sheets according to the template provided at the beginning of the mission which includes a brief description of task(s) conducted each day signed and submitted to team leader/project manager for revision and approval. Holidays, weekends and working days outside Lebanon could not be included in the Time Sheet as working days unless there is a prior written approval from the contracting authority.
- An inception report that serves as a formal document that provides a clear understanding of the mission and outlines the planned framework and methodology for conducting the work. It ensures mutual understanding and adherence to the agreed-upon roles and responsibilities. The report should include a comprehensive description of the expert's planned framework and approach to work, outlining the methodologies to be employed in carrying out the tasks outlined in the TORs.
- Visti reports: After visiting every school, the expert is expected to submit a report outlining findings and providing a detailed description of the situation in addition to recommendations when possible.
- A comprehensive end of mission's report submitted to team leader/project manager for revision and approval including:
 - Scope and objectives of the mission.
 - Approach adopted for conducting the mission.
 - List of outputs produced during the mission (including meetings and people met).
 - Description of the outputs produced during the mission.
 - Problems and challenges encountered during the mission.
 - Recommendations for the follow-up of the mission (if any).
 - Recommendations for the improvement of project implementation (if any).
- Documents produced during the implementation of the mission in the form of definitive version (drafts can be included if and only if are relevant for the implementation of the mission or its follow-up).
- All documents should be delivered in hard copy and in digital form using exclusively MS Office applications.

3 Expert Profile

3.1 Qualifications and skills.

- Language skills: Arabic + Minimum level C1 – English
- Ability to work under pressure with least supervision.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills.
- Knowledge of the Lebanese education system will be considered as an asset.
- Bachelor's degree in architecture, civil engineering, electromechanical engineering, or a related field.
- Several years of experience in construction inspection, particularly in school rehabilitation projects or similar educational facility construction.
- Knowledge of construction materials, techniques, and quality standards.
- Familiarity with local and national building codes and regulations.
- Strong attention to detail and observational skills.
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills for working with contractors and project teams.
- Ability to assess and prioritize construction-related issues and risks.
- Proficiency in using inspection tools and software.
- Commitment to safety and quality in construction projects.

3.2 General professional experience

- At least 5 years of professional experience in construction and rehabilitation works.
- Specific experience in education construction inspection and rehabilitation quality assurance.
- Strong experience in developing technical quality assurance reports and documentation.
- Specific experience in the field of career guidance and counselling in general education in Lebanon (at least 3 years).

Note: Please be aware that the selected candidate will be invited to attend an interview.