**Annex 4 – Goods and services specification**

TA 9215: Supporting Policies and Implementation in the School Sector

**Terms of Reference**

**For**

**The services of International Examination Specialist to develop a detailed Terms of Reference and guidance on Bidding and selection process for the 'establishment of item bank and capacity development for standardized test at National Examination Board'**

**Background:**

British Council is implementing Asian Development Bank (ADB) and European Union (EU) supported TA 9215: Supporting Policies and Implementation in the School Sector for program management, coordination and technical support to the government of Nepal to implement School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). The three technical assistance (TA) outputs for the SSDP TA (SSDP TA Facility) are: (i) capacity development for policy implementation strengthened; (ii) program management and monitoring strengthened; and (iii) knowledge management strengthened.

Building on SSDP’s Mid Term Review (MTR), a Capacity and Institutional Assessment (CIA) for SSDP was carried out in 2019, which identified Assessment and Examination as one of the priority thematic areas. A Capacity and Institutional Development Plan (CIDP) was developed further elaborating priority TA interventions on Assessment and Examination. MTR and CIA pointed out several issues regarding assessment and examination such as low level of existing technical capacity at different levels of the system to implement assessment - based on standardized test items; need to reinforce coordination between National Examination Board (NEB), Education Review Office (ERO), Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and its other relevant Central Line Agencies (CLAs); dominating perception that evaluation is a normative ‘audit-type’ process; etc.

The SSDP (2016-2023[[1]](#footnote-1)) has envisioned public examinations, certification and accreditation functions for grades 8, 10 and 12 to be held at local, provincial and federal levels respectively. NEB is to oversee and provide quality assurance for public examinations by ensuring that these examinations are competency-based and standardized. At present NEB is conducting grade 10, 11 and 12 examinations and grade 8 examination is being conducted by Local Governments (LGs).

Assessment should be valid, reliable, fair and should communicate uniform meaning. In case of public examinations there are issues related to the quality of test and comparability of test from

one year to another. Comparability issue might increase when there are examinations at the provincial and LG levels. SSDP also points out that there is an emphasis on rote memorization in the classroom teaching-learning and much less time is spent on developing students’ analytical skills. The assessment and examination system is yet to strengthen its focus on application and synthesis skills. SSDP observes that ‘it is unlikely that teachers will change the way they teach unless there is a change in the ways by which teachers and their students are assessed’. Standardization of public examinations has been emphasized to improve quality of testing.

NEB is working towards standardization of grade 8, 10 and 12 examinations based on the curriculum of these grades. But NEB does not have the required item banking system and related human resources to analyse items, assemble tests and prepare reports.

SSDP TA Facility is supporting NEB in the standardization of Basic Level Examination (BLE) at grade 8. Framework for Grade 8 Standardized Test has been developed; item writing training was provided, and now item development is going on and the aim is to prepare a depository of some 3000 items for grade 8 Science and Technology, Mathematics and English subjects. Currently, items developed by item writers are first reviewed by item review team and then submitted to NEB for their processing which also includes: i) item moderation by item moderation committee; ii) final decision on the items; iii) final setting of items and iv) item storing. At this point complications in the test standardization are strikingly visible when working without item banking and item analysis software, which is also the case in grade 10 test standardization. There is a need to act now to acquire item banking software and provide capacity building for NEB so that by the time the first phase of items are in the hard copy depository, they can be transferred[[2]](#footnote-2) into item banking before item pretesting.

The International Examination Specialist (herein referred to as “Specialist”) as a **resource person** is proposed to support development of terms of reference (TOR) for procuring item development software and identify capacity development needs of NEB and other related agencies to rollout standardization of examination.

**Scope of the Work:**

The Specialist is expected to assess current situation of standardization of examination of grade 8; prepare TOR for the supply of item banking software customized to the need of NEB; and identify capacity development needs for standardization of examination.

**Detailed Tasks:**

Detailed tasks include but not limited to the following:

1. **Item Banking Software[[3]](#footnote-3)**
   * + Specification of item banking software
     + Breadth and depth of required customization of item banking software as per need of NEB
     + Cost estimation for item banking software and its customization
     + Software update or renewal requirement – duration and cost estimates
2. **Software and equipment** 
   * + Prepare list of software and equipment required for data management, item and test analysis, report generation, online assessment management, and any others which are in use currently.
     + Prepare tentative cost that might be incurred for the software and equipment, and their updating and maintenance.

* Innovations underway that NEB needs to consider adapting and use.

1. **Identification and Listing of Capacity Development Areas**

* Capacity development areas to maintain item bank
  + - Capacity development areas on specified tasks – item paneling, test assembling, item/test pre-test, CTT/IRT, etc.
    - Persons and type of capacity required such as item writers: item upload, support in item paneling, tracing item development stages; LG personnel: assembling test for BLE, assessment data input.
    - Suggest content area and time duration for the identified capacity development areas.
    - Suggest tentative budget for each of the capacity development areas.
    - Prepare schedule for test standardization and development of assessment and examination in terms of phases such as within a year, in 3 years and in 5 years.
    - Innovations underway in the assessment and examination that NEB needs to consider adapting and use.

1. **Development of Terms of Reference and suggestive notes**

* Prepare a detailed Terms of Reference and suggestive notes on the bidding process, selection process, and task implementation along with tentative budget for the 'establishment of item banking and capacity development for standardized test' for NEB.

**Suggested Methodology**

* develop elaborate methodology in the proposal including virtual interaction modality as required through (but not limited to) desk review, needs identification, interviews with SSDP TA Facility and NEB personnel
* Share drafts for review and feedback
* Presentation and discussion sessions/workshops.

**Minimum Qualification Requirements:**

The Specialist shall preferably have Master’s degree in Education/Management or relevant field experience with at least 5 years in assessment and testing along with international work experience on testing and item banking. Familiarity with Nepali education sector and/or experience of working on assessment and examination sector in South Asia would be an advantage.

**Deliverables**

* + - Terms of Reference for the 'establishment of item bank and capacity development for standardized test at NEB'.
    - Tentative budget for 'establishment of item bank and capacity development for standardized test'.
    - Suggestive notes on the bidding process, selection process, and task implementation.

**Engagement Period:**

The Specialist will be engaged for 30 person days from December 2020 to January 2021 (over 2 months). If additional need is identified, it may be requested to extend the engagement accordingly. [[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Ministry of Education. (2016). *School Sector Development Plan, Nepal, 2016–2023.* Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal. After the MTR, the government decided to end the SSDP by July 2021 and develop new education plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There might be chance of loss of history of the item in this transfer. At present these are maintained in the track change mode as far as possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. During discussions with NEB, it has been emphasized that renewal of item banking software should not be mandatory for NEB when purchasing software. When an update is required it would be done by NEB. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The engagement period (Dec ’20-Jan ’21) is contingent to completion of recruitment and contracting. It is to be understood that the engagement period of 30 days over 2 months period will start once the contractual formalities with the Specialist is completed. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)