**STAGES II Impact Study Consultancy (Re-announced)**

**Terms of Assignment**

**1. Background**

The Aga Khan Education Services (AKES), an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), is one of the largest private, not-for-profit, non-denominational educational networks in the developing world. AKES Afghanistan (AKES,A) has been supporting 11 highly remote government schools (of which four schools are located in areas with no telecom signals) in the provinces of Baghlan, Balkh, Badakhshan and Kunduz since 2017 as part of a Girls’ Education Challenge Transition (GEC-T) project entitled *Steps towards Afghan Girls’ Educational Success (STAGES II)*. STAGES II is implemented by a consortium of partners led by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), including AKES,A, Care International, Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Afghanistan Education Production Organization (AEPO) in 16 provinces of Afghanistan. AKES,A has worked only in four of these provinces.

After-school tutorial sessions, library enrichment, teacher training, social accountability sessions, and School Management Shura (SMS) members training and mentoring are key activities of AKES,A within the project. Using a multi-faceted approach, AKES,A improved learning outcomes of struggling students (i.e. those at risk of dropping out of school) through an easily replicable remedial education program model. AKES,A provided after school tutorial sessions in reading, math, science and English to low performing students, especially girls, both within schools and at community levels.

AKES,A hired extra teachers to provide extra tutorial sessions to low performing students. Additionally, the project equipped libraries with books appropriate for students, teachers, and community members. The project conducted reading competitions to promote reading culture among students and community members. Apart from regular support to hired extra teachers, AKES,A also trained and mentored government school teachers on child-centered, child protection and gender-responsive pedagogy and classroom management with an aim to sustain project activities beyond the project closure. AKES,A conducted social accountability sessions twice a year in the communities through inviting representative groups of community members and providing open discussion platforms for community members as well as school personnel to discuss and practice collective decision making on girls’ education matters and issues. Finally, AKES,A trained and mentored School Management Shura (SMS) members on the importance of girls’ education, gender equity, child protection and inclusive education to enhance community buy-in towards girls’ education.

**2. Purpose of the Assignment**

AKES,A is looking for a consultant/firm to conduct an impact study of STAGES II project and its activities, lessons learned, challenges and success factors to influence MoE policy and practice and inform AKES,A current and future education programming with a special focus on girls education in Afghanistan.

***Specific Objectives***

1. Review STAGES II related project agreements, reports, studies, evaluations, activity profiles, and other associated documentations; and visit project sites to evaluate project impact against project goals, outcomes, key performance indicators and crosscutting themes of gender sensitive programming and reaching out to most marginalized children and communities, specifically with respect to AKES,A after school tutorial programs, library enrichment, teacher training, social accountability sessions, and School Management Shura (SMS) members training and mentoring;

* **Research Question 1**: To what extent has the STAGES II project been impactful in regards to project goals, outcomes, key performance indicators and crosscutting themes of gender sensitive programming and reaching out to most marginalized children and communities? To what extent has the STAGES II components of AKES,A after school tutorial programs, library enrichment, teacher training, social accountability sessions, and School Management Shura (SMS) members training and mentoring been impactful in regards to project goals, outcomes, key performance indicators and crosscutting themes of gender sensitive programming and reaching out to most marginalized children and communities?

1. Synthesize information about challenges and success factors of AKES, A project activities to highlight its impact through conducting a series of interviews, focus group discussions and any other research data collection tools at targeted schools and communities leveraging AKES,A education and M&E teams as enumerators/assistants;

* **Research Question 2**: What are the challenges and success factors of the project that can influence MoE policy and practice and inform current and future education programming with a focus on girls’ education and gender equality?

1. Explore the impact of STAGES II on education delivery and practices on the ground in the AKES, A targeted communities in regard to the government system and provision. Examine the capability of the government system to sustain project interventions at expected quality in the targeted schools/areas post STAGES II*.*

* **Research Question 3**: To what extent has the project successfully supplemented what the government provided/is providing? To what extent duplication of activities/parallel works has been avoided? What would the Ministry of Education (MoE) need to consider in order to sustain the project interventions post STAGES II?

1. Examine the effectiveness of the AKES, A remedial education model (after school tutorials using extra teachers and extra tutorials model) used in the project. Examine the effectiveness of the pedagogic practices (Reading to Learn approach for reading, use of low cost manipulative and scaffolding techniques for math, communicative language teaching approaches for English, demonstration of science experiments for science) used within the remedial education program. Explore areas for improvement to the remedial education model and pedagogic practices particularly with respect to marginalized girls and to technology integration.

* **Research Question 4**: How effective has the AKES, A remedial education model (after school tutorials using extra teachers and extra tutorials model) and its pedagogic practices been for vulnerable girls and boys? How effective has the remedial education model and its pedagogic practices been in remote areas specifically? How effective the remedial education model and its pedagogic practices would be with integrating technology?

1. Provide a set of actionable recommendations linking them to government key priority themes (National Education Strategic Plan IV) and AKES Education Strategy for effective implementation of future education programming with a focus on girls’ education and gender equality in Afghanistan.

* **Research Question 5**: What are key actionable short and medium term recommendations for effective implementation of future education programming with a focus on girls’ education and gender equality in Afghanistan considering government priorities and AKES,A Education Strategy?

**3. Stakeholders and Users**

The study will seek the views of, and be useful to, a range of internal and external stakeholders.

1. Internal stakeholders and users: Fund Manager, PMU, AKES,A national and regional offices, target schools, including school Shuras;
2. External stakeholders and users: MoE, AKES Head Office team, AKDN office, AKF, National Council, members of the Development Partners’ Group and international and national civil society organizations involved in implementing education initiatives.

**4. Selection criteria**

* Education – Post graduate degree in education, social science and/or related disciplines required, preference given to consultants with strong education background in pedagogical leaderships.
* Professional and Skills Experience –Strong research, analytical and operational experience in social sectors, preferably in the Education sector and Remedial Education Programming. Understanding context of working in conflict affected countries is preferred.
* Teamwork – Demonstrated success working in teams, tangible record of conducting and leading research across teams and diverse contexts;
* Conceptual and analytic skills – Creative approach that can help clients and team members analyze situations, set priorities and develop innovative programs;
* Time management – A track record of delivering high-quality products in a timely fashion. Capability of managing uncertainties in the work program and undertaking a range of tasks simultaneously.
* Proficiency in using a range of ICT tools for different purposes ranging from data analysis to training and development
* Field experience in a least developed country setting is strongly preferred. Physical wellbeing and ability to travel to remote areas of Afghanistan is highly preferred.

**Ethical protocols**

The assessment approach must consider the safety of all participants, adults and especially children at all stages of the assessment. The assessment approach must consider safeguarding of the Aga Khan Development Network, associated agencies and partners. The consultant / organization will need to demonstrate how they have considered the protection of children through the different stages, including recruitment and training of research staff, data collection and data analysis and report writing.

The consultant is required to set out their approach to ensuring complete compliance with international good practice with regards to research ethics and protocols particularly with regards to safeguarding children, vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities) and those in fragile and conflict affected areas. Consideration should be given to the items listed below. Note that this is not an exhaustive list and therefore, potential contractors should consider additional aspects of ethics. The consultant is also required to include a copy of their ethics policy as part of the package of supporting documents:

* administrative, technical and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality of those participating in research;
* physical safeguards for those conducting research;
* data protection and secure maintenance procedures for personal information;
* parental consent concerning data collection from minors (participants under 18) or collation of data about minors;
* age- and ability-appropriate assent processes based on reasonable assumptions about comprehension for the ages of minors and minors with disabilities they intend to involve in the research; and
* Age-appropriate participation of minors, including in the development of data collection tools.

**5. Deliverables**

* **Inception report** (2 pages)
* **Study summary** (2-3 page summary of key study findings and recommendations);
* **Validation workshop** of research findings and recommendationswith key stakeholders(national and regional staff, teachers, school personnel, students and community members).
* **Draft and final study report** (for reporting format, see Annex 1) and **a Power Point Presentation of key findings.**
* **Short summary report** (2 pages – for general dissemination to stakeholders).
* **One Day Training for Education and M&E Staff** on data collection methods and approaches.
* **Full study report** (Maximum 30 pages)

**6. Terms of the assignment**

The lessons learned study should start **from February 2021** with final deliverables handed over to AKES,A **by mid-April 2021** (whereas the first draft of the study report should be submitted before the **end of March 2021**). The total number of days for the consultancy is 30 working days over two month period.

**7. Reporting line**

The consultant will report to the Project Coordinator, who will coordinate the project impact study activities with relevant program team and stakeholders. The consultant will work in close coordination and consultation with the Project Coordinator, AKES, A academics team and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Unit (MER) team.

**8. Work location(s)**

Half of the assignment will be Home Based (will include desk review, interviews, data analysis and report writing). The consultant will visit project sites in Badakhshan and/or Baghlan, Kunduz and Balkh. They will also spend time in Kabul conducting validation workshop of research findings with program stakeholders.

**9. Terms of Payment**

Payment will be processed 100% after the service delivery, and subject to the production of documents developed to the highest quality standards as deemed by the AKES,A program team.

**10. Application process**

Individuals / organizations interested in leading this impact study exercise must submit their CVs/fact sheets and a technical and cost proposal, including the description of relevant experiences they have with the proposed methodology (**Any proposal format,** **Not more than 10 pages**), by electronic mail by **January 28, 2020 COB Afghanistan Time**. Proposals should be submitted to [**akesafg.hr@akdn.org.**](mailto:akesafg.hr@akdn.org.) Questions relevant to this study should be emailed to [**akesafg.hr@akdn.org**](mailto:akesafg.hr@akdn.org) before **January 27, 2020**.

Proposal evaluation criteria

1. Technical Proposal
   1. ToR: Understanding of the ToR and addressing the ToR deliverables. (10 points)
   2. Consultancy methodology: Sound research methodology including research conceptual framework, qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, triangulation of findings, pedagogical practices analysis, , timeline, etc. (30 points)
   3. Writing style: Integrity, coherence, and originality of the proposal. (10 points)
2. Consultant background

Relevant experience and technical knowledge in remedial education programming, pedagogical leaderships, school improvement; and experience working in Afghanistan or any other least-developed country. Experience of conducting face to face and online trainings. (30 points)

1. Cost/budget

Reasonable and appropriate costing. Clear budget alignment between level of effort, technical approach, and deliverables. (20 points)