

Call for proposals for a National Technical Partner for The South Asian Assessment Alliance

Children in Crisis (known as Street Child globally) began working in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1997 and since then has worked consistently within Kabul and across Afghanistan's provinces to improve access to quality education for the most marginalized children, to guarantee that children have their right to equitable and quality education protected and afforded to them.

Project Background:

A lack of accountability is identified as the most important factor for failure to increase learning among children [WDR 2004, UNESCO 2018]. Accountability in education is comprised of 5 intersecting core components: (i) citizen awareness; (ii) citizen action; (iii) civic mobilisation; (iii) citizen-state interface; and (v) state action and as such, these components create considerable challenges for accountability.

Children in Crisis, as part of The South Asian Assessment Alliance, is implementing a three-year project (2021-2023) funded by GPE-Education Out Loud (EOL)¹ in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal to enhance accountability in the education space through (though not restricted to) citizen led assessments². The project intends to create an alliance of actors to enhance

1. Availability and Access to learning assessment tools: Increase availability and access to learning assessment tools
2. Advocacy and Analysis: Increase analysis and active use of assessment data
3. Action: Increase engagement with evidence to enact and embed evidence-informed, equity-focused educational interventions; and
4. Accountability: increase accountability towards transnational targets in education, including the Education 2030 Framework for Action and SDG 4.

The project focuses on four interventions.

1. Assessment Intervention
 - (i) increasing capacities and capabilities of relevant actors to administer assessment
 - (ii) administering assessments
2. Advocacy Intervention
 - (i) increasing capabilities and competencies of actors to analyse assessment data
 - (ii) increasing capacities to advocate
3. Action Intervention
 - (i) increasing capacities and capabilities of actors to respond to areas of improvement
4. Accountability Intervention
 - (i) is to increase accountability across actors and activities

¹ EOL is the Global Partnership for Education's fund for advocacy and social accountability. The fund supports civil society to be active and influential in shaping education policy to better meet the needs of communities.

² Citizen led assessments unlike other large scale assessments in education space, test basic competencies of children and include only smaller number of items for each competency. Citizens are involved in data collection and the data collection process is itself an important component of initiative. The data emerging from the assessment has a broad audience which is not restricted to authorities and policymakers.

Year 1 project activities focuses on setting the stage which is followed by scaling up in Year 2. The activities in Year 3 shall focus on sustainability.

At a national level in Afghanistan, the South Asian Assessment Alliance shall be led by Children in Crisis and a national partner with representation from other entities at the national, provincial and local level. The national partner shall be selected through this call for proposals.

Who can apply?

- Registered Organizations (preferably not for profit organizations- though not mandatory) with an extensive track record in survey, research and evaluation in Afghanistan.
- Previous experience in conducting research on the education sector in Afghanistan is desirable
- Competency in both quantitative and qualitative research is require
- Prior experience in survey and research methods used in evaluating foundational learning levels of children (literacy and numeracy) is highly desirable

To apply for this call, please send your organization's profile, highlighting your experience in research and evaluation space (which includes experience evaluating projects and programs in education space), along with a maximum 2-page concept note (in your own template), to siddharth.pillai@street-child.org, copy to: fraidoon.amiri@street-child.org, no later than 14th February-2021, 5pm Kabul time. Executive Summary of the project is annexed (Annex A) for your reference.

Annex A: The South Asian Assessment Alliance: Communicating and Collaborating for Change - Executive Summary

A lack of accountability is identified as the most important factor for failure to increase learning [WDR 2004, UNESCO 2018]. Accountability in education is comprised of 5 intersecting core components: (i) citizen awareness; (ii) citizen action; (iii) civic mobilisation; (iii) citizen-state interface; and (v) state action and as such, these components create considerable challenges for accountability.

The proposed project reinforces the role of assessment, and addresses 4 critical challenges that are constraints on this change: (i) a lack of availability and accessibility of simple, scalable and sustainable assessments; (ii) a lack of accessibility of assessments; (iii) a lack of capacity to analyse and advocate amongst citizens, communities and civil society actors; and (iv) a lack of capacity to act on assessment outcomes by state authorities across South Asia.

The South Asian Assessment Alliance: Communicating and Collaborating for Change will operate in four countries [Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar] and aims to create a transnational alliance of actors to ensure quality, equitable education for most marginalised children and communities. A transnational accountability apparatus will be established through this proposed intervention enabling (i) effective, efficient allocation of resources; and (ii) evidence informed policies and programmes through rigorous, robust tracking towards transnational targets. Four key objectives of this intervention include (i) increase availability and access to assessments amongst citizens and communities [Objective 1]; (ii) increase analysis and active use of assessments to advocate for evidence-informed, equity-focused educational interventions [Objective 2]; (iii) increase engagement with evidence to enact and embed evidence-informed, equity-focused educational interventions [Objective 3]; and (iv) Increase accountability towards transnational targets in education, including the Education 2030 Framework for Action and SDG 4 [Objective 4]. This action will strengthen the capacity of 75,000 citizens, 100 civil society organisations, 500 targeted stakeholders to engage in Citizen-led Assessments [CLAs] as a first step towards demanding accountability, delivering effective advocacy and forming functional national and transnational alliances to achieve equitable learning for the most marginalised children.

Street Child will lead the alliance and work with the Pratham Education Foundation to convene a network of national organisations, creating capacity for assessment, advocacy, action and accountability across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal and their alliance actors.

The proposed project responds to and reinforces influential initiatives at the regional and global levels. At the regional level, it responds to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation [SAARC] resolution to reform education evaluation as a significant step towards ensuring excellent, equitable education [SAARC Kathmandu Declaration 2014] and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation [BIMSTEC] priority of greater coordination and collaboration amongst members and increased investment in excellent, equitable education [BIMSTEC Colombo Statement on Poverty Alleviation 2017]. At the global level, it responds to the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which recognises the state as responsible for ensuring equal and equitable access to education whilst calling for states to be supplemented and supported as the size, scale and scope of ensuring education for all requires radical partnerships.

Key Interventions during the Project

1. An **Assessment Intervention** focuses on (i) increasing capacities and capabilities to administer assessment amongst 75 000 citizens and 100 civil society organisations; and (ii) administering assessments across 7 500 households in the project period. The objective of this intervention is to democratise and deparochialise assessment amongst citizens and civil society organisations; its outcome allows citizens and civil society organisations to administer assessments independent of additional assistance beyond the project period, therefore institutionalising the assessment approach as a strong, sustained avenue for acquiring information on learning levels.
2. An **Advocacy Intervention** focuses on (i) increasing capacities and competencies to analyse assessment data; and (ii) increasing capacities to advocate amongst 75 000 citizens and 100 civil society organisations. The objective of this intervention is to institutionalise the cycle of assessment analysis to activate advocacy and catalyse informed investment and intervention from state authorities and school administrations; its outcomes intensifies attention, increased investment and improved intervention for most marginalised children and communities.
3. An **Action Intervention** focuses on increasing capacities and capabilities to respond to areas of improvement using evidence-informed, equity-focused interventions amongst 375 school administrators and 125 state authorities. The objective of this intervention is to institutionalise engagement with evidence, and to enact, evaluate and adjust as appropriate to contextual conditions; its outcome allows an increase in capacities to enact and embed effective interventions beyond the project period.
4. An **Accountability Intervention** focuses on initiating and institutionalising the alliance as an accountability apparatus, active at the national and transnational levels. The objective of this intervention is to increase accountability across actors and activities; its outcome allows tracking towards transnational targets, using an integrated approach across actors and activities to assure a clear, coherent feedback and learning loop.

Activities during the Project

Year 1: The first year focuses on stage-setting, where the project proposes to (i) convene the core team and country teams [comprising representatives from identified national organisations]; (ii) design and deliver an assessment capacity strengthening module [including content on citizen-led assessment techniques and tools; data collection, cleaning and analysis; and reporting]; (iii) conduct consultations with identified stakeholders [including ministries of education, curriculum authorities etc] to contextualise and translate assessments and locate them against national learning frameworks; (iv) conduct an assessment pilot to test and validate the tools [across approx. 4-6 villages]; (v) design and deliver an advocacy course [including content on communicating and creating accountability]; and (vi) advocate for the adoption of the assessment techniques and tools at the provincial level at the next stage. In particular, advocacy activities will emphasise the assessment methodology and methods, including its participatory approach, and its appropriateness for use amongst most marginalised groups.

Year 2: The second year centres on scaling, where the project proposes to (i) ascertain approaches to sampling to target information on most marginalised groups; (ii) cascade capacity strengthening and support from country teams to civil society organisations, including teacher and student groups in target constituencies; (iii) consolidate strategic partnerships at the provincial level; and (iv) scale up assessments to the provincial level [focusing areas that are under-reached or under-represented in other assessment initiatives, where they exist]. The project also proposes to (v) convene country-level alliances including national and local level organisations; and through this alliance, (vi) accelerate advocacy efforts at the national and transnational levels. Advocacy activities will shift towards an analysis of how national policies are responding to the needs of most marginalised groups, and towards increasing accountability for targeted, tailored provision that increases return on investments. In addition, the project proposes to (vii) conduct

training for targeted stakeholders to increase awareness and analyse approaches for potential to address areas of improvement; and (viii) conduct training for alliances to coach stakeholders to enact, evaluate and embed evidence. This strategic inclusion responds to recommendations from stakeholder consultations conducted in Year Zero; whilst active intervention in response to assessment is outside the scope of this project, capacity strengthening activities are intended to catalyse engagement with evidence amongst state authorities, school administrators and stakeholders, in order to interpret evidence and implement informed interventions.

Year 3: The third year converges on sustaining, where the project proposes to (i) accelerate integration and representation of local level organisations in national and transnational fora; and (ii) create an accountability apparatus that responds to transnational commitments to increase access, equity, inclusion, quality and learning [UNESCO 2015]. Advocacy efforts will shift towards the creation of comparative assessments to initiative and informed coordinated collective action for most marginalised groups across the region – with a particular focus on cross-country constituencies (for example, refugee groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan; or bonded labourers in India, Nepal and Pakistan). Concrete outputs include (i) a detailed document (including audio-visual components) to support the scaling of our assessment techniques and tools at the national and transnational levels; and (ii) a cross-country conference with participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to enhance and expand the alliance – and intensify accountability to commitments - across the region [in particular, including GPE partners Bhutan and Pakistan]. All activities have been designed and developed with due, diligent consideration of the constraints created by the COVID-19 crisis with agreed contingencies in all cases.