

Feasibility study

Terms of reference

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International association “Interactive open schools” (MIOS Tuzla) opens a call to conduct an independent feasibility study of MIOS’s model of work in the education sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a starting point in creation of project intervention that will ensure expected social impact.

1. Background and Rationale

Bosnia and Herzegovina consistently scores poorly in international education studies. The inequality in the education system is evident and shown in many national and international studies. The 2018 PISA study also shows that students living in socio-economically marginalized conditions are two years behind their classmates in knowledge and other skills. If this problem is not addressed in school and students do not receive special support, the problem multiplies and in a short time students are 3 - 4 year behind their classmates. Moreover, Bosnia is in 62nd place out of 77 in the Pisa ranking, i.e. in the bottom third. The results in reading, mathematics and science are very poor. It could be shown that the teachers do not respond flexibly and differentiated to the needs of the students.

In addition, many schools suffer from the fact that teachers change frequently (even throughout the same school year), fewer students are enrolled each year, and this increases the fluctuation among teachers. Political changes are also often intertwined with the change of school’s principals and thus with the school climate. Most schools are equipped with poor infrastructure, which is particularly visible in the IT sector.

External evaluation of MIOS’s previous project initiatives in Tuzla canton showed success and change, but in order to be sustainable, evaluation showed the approaches need to be intensified for further steps and more in-depth changes. Education for all, can level out socio-economic differences and thus be a factor in poverty reduction.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is compulsory education for primary school age (from 6 until the age of 15). The school system in Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of 9 years of elementary school (6 - 15 years) and then the possibility to attend either 3 years of vocational school or 4 years of vocational secondary school or high school. After 9 +4 years there is the possibility to study.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities, the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko district. The Federation, in turn, is divided into 10 cantons.

Education policy is the responsibility of the cantons and in Republic of Srpska and Brčko district is centralized.

In a survey conducted by State Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education (APOS0), a low level of knowledge in basic subjects (language, mathematics, science) was found. This confirmed the results of the TIMSS study (Trends in international Mathematics- and Sciences Studies) from 2008, in which Bosnia and Herzegovina was below the international average in all areas. Among other things, the study documented the following weak factors: principals need more training in leadership and management, teachers need more trainings in methods and approaches that ensures higher student's engagement and inclusion, teaching process needs to be adapted more to the individual needs of students using different methods. Teaching in schools is still highly frontal – "same approach fits all or average". This decrease or do not allow students to develop experience and learning about a democratic values and how to live it in social context, and thus how to demonstrate of being responsible citizens. According to APOS0, for example, the students of Tuzla Canton had the worst scores in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of primary school. Additional analysis shows that the school system in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not address the disadvantages of socioeconomically disadvantaged children.

The recommendations of the above-mentioned study strongly support the approaches of MIOS: continuous in-service training for teachers, school's organizational development in which school's principals are also trained and parents play a partner role, application of methods that strengthen students' self-confidence and experience of self-efficacy.

The 2018 PISA results show that children from marginalized socio-economic circumstances are 1-2 years behind their peers in knowledge and school-relevant skills when they enter school. Without professional and tailored pedagogical support, these findings multiply and quickly disadvantaged children are 3 - 4 years behind. That shows how urgent is the action needed to provide children with equal educational opportunities. The evaluation also states that: "*Therefore, there is a need to highlight more clearly and intensely all the possible consequences of not including students of lower socioeconomic status into active processes of learning and participation, as determined by numerous researches on education and by educational practices and realities.*" (Project Evaluation p. 53).

Overall, Bosnia and Herzegovina performs extremely poorly in the 2018 PISA study. Even compared to its immediate neighbours (Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro) Bosnia and Herzegovina is behind the

neighbouring countries in all comparisons, only North Macedonia is similarly bad. In the country rankings, Bosnia is in 62nd place out of 77; from its immediate surroundings.

Especially in the area of reading, the basis for the other areas, Bosnia and Herzegovina has very poor scores. And in vocational secondary schools, which mainly train for the trades, those student's knowledge is in the lower range and who have few prospects. The survey of the students showed that although they feel comfortable in their schools, in their opinion the teachers do not adapt their lessons to the needs of the students. There is no differentiation, lessons that are incomprehensible are not translated into comprehensible units.

The recommendations of the PISA studies go in the direction of promoting reading already at preschool age but also at elementary school age and also involving parents and the community. The study recommends investing heavily in teacher training to strengthen their expertise, but also their ability to differentiate and identify needs. It also emphasizes that support methods for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families are important, as is community involvement.

In the area of work with parents, it is not only reading promotion that is important. Model projects also show that parents provide little support for their children, especially if they live in poverty. Parents of all classes increasingly pay little attention to a healthy diet; fast food and sweets are widespread, as is obesity. In addition, poorly organized road traffic, high levels of air pollution and few free play areas mean that children get too little exercise. Instead, children increasingly spend a lot of time in front of screens.

In previous two projects MIOS delivered so far, teacher staff from 41 schools have been trained to use interactive methods, to plan and implement support for socio-economically disadvantaged children, and to move towards becoming democratic schools through school development teams. In some schools, the special programs for disadvantaged students had an impact, but due to the short period of time, the impact was only on the children included in the program and not yet on all affected students in a school (findings of the evaluation). The evaluation also showed that intensive work needs to be done on the attitude and school climate of the entire school so that the effects of the methods benefit all students. Especially with the turnover of teachers and the change of directors, it is important to introduce additional supports for the school climate, such as parents and other educational actors from the district. At the same time, the evaluation sees that MIOS as an organization carries out the processes very well and is appreciated by the schools, which engage in the processes and focus on the children. Here, the professionalism, the long-term nature and the commitment of MIOS are emphasized. The

evaluators recommend: „*In order to achieve and ensure the planned impact of project activities, and to form a stable and effective model of change, it would be necessary to work with a significantly lower number of schools than the current one (40 schools), but with increased intensity of activities and a higher number of actively involved actors within schools and communities. MIOS uses different approaches when working with schools, such as "1km2 of education", and therefore, it is recommended to use the mentioned or similar model on a smaller number of schools, since such model can ensure the achievement of the planned project impact, but also because MIOS already has certain experiences in applying this model in one school.*“ (Project evaluation S. 56)

This feasibility study should take into account the results of the work on the projects "One square kilometre of education", "Schools for all", which are partner projects of MIOS Tuzla, the Freudenberg Foundation, Germany and the Ministry for International Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany (abbreviated BMZ), realized in the period from 2017 to 2023.

2. Purpose, Objectives and Use

The purpose of this feasibility study is to provide a sound basis for the next stage in MIOS's Tuzla work which will be formulated in new project proposal. The results of the feasibility study will lay the ground for a solid project proposal that will offer project interventions for the modernization of the educational systems of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this we mean professional development of educators with the intention of building and strengthening democratic, inclusive values in educational institutions including local communities and the economic and socio-emotional strengthening of end users - children and youth in the educational systems of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans. This is the core of MIOS's Tuzla work. Along with the feasibility study a baseline study should be delivered as a starting point in evaluating the results of the implementation of project interventions.

It is expected to give valuable insights for the proposal finalization as well as for the project conduction and the choice of project partner. The study findings should provide overview of key areas in consideration of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability dimensions and support to fill identified data gaps.

Following are the objectives of the proposed study structured along DAC criteria and identified data needs to strengthen the conceptualization of the project and DAC Questions for assessing the feasibility (minimum requirement by donor) of the suggested project concept:

- a) *Analysis of the situation in the targeted project area (education sector – formal and non-formal) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*
- b) *A meaningful analysis of all active stakeholders on site and their respective activities with regards to pre-service and in-service education of teachers or adults with the educator's role, continuous professional development of educators, schools organizational development.*
- c) *Analysis of gaps and challenges of currently implemented activities by MIOS Tuzla and beneficiary needs in the frame of identifying what added value will MIOS's project will create in comparison to existing activities on the ground; Validation of the proposed impact logic (ToC, impact matrix).*
- d) *Assess whether proposed project actions are not duplicating but complimentary to other efforts outside of MIOS work.*
- e) *Characteristics and needs of potential beneficiaries and its relevance to proposed interventions.*
- f) *Potential partner in terms of experiences and capacity building needs of potential partners*
- g) *The feasibility study should critically review the planned project in terms of the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability dimensions*
- h) *Risks and mitigation factors analysis.*

3. The feasibility study questions

The feasibility study will follow the OECD DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability dimensions. Please check the guidelines for feasibility study and OECD DAC criteria.

Link: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/39119068.pdf>

4. Methodology

The feasibility study is to be designed and conducted at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina using qualitative research design. The consultant is expected to conduct a desk research of the project concept note, and/or similar project documentation as well as consult publicly available government documentation in order to propose the best methodology to meet the feasibility study objectives.

The methodology should include a comprehensive desk research of the MIOS programs and projects focused on the professional support to schools (teaching staff), parents and development of teaching practices within the schools and the communities around schools as well as consulting policy documents or publicly available government reports if relevant. The interviews should be conducted with relevant government agencies, other key stakeholders including civil society organizations that work in same sector and have same or similar work, children and youth groups, community based organizations, international organizations if relevant, and project partners. The feasibility study is expected to provide a mapping of the existing activities of other NGOs as well as an overview of the current situation in terms of feasibility to implement the foreseen project activities on the ground.

The feasibility study should assess the possibility of establishing and developing a sustainable unique centre for the development and implementation of pedagogical innovations in formal and non-formal education, research and partnership that would a) provide an expert and professional education, consulting and mentoring services to the abovementioned users, b) implement social innovations as a response to complex problems and needs in education and the community, c) conducted and based his own work on the research. The emphasis is on a systemic approach in the action of various actors within the community / society.

Additionally, the study should include an estimate of the costs of construction and maintenance of a building with adequate square footage and location which would offer specific services for individual and group work, space for social innovation, space for conferences, education, and networking events in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The feasibility study should be based on the analysis of the achieved results of MIOS's Tuzla above-mentioned project, the concept note for the new project proposal to be applied at Bengo, the analysis

of the social and economic context in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the analysis of the documents and strategies that regulate this area or include this area in a broader development strategy at all levels (local communities, cantons, entities, state), existing services and projects that are currently available in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, determine the opportunities, needs and profitability for establishing a new structure, interventions, approaches and methods according to the above-mentioned target groups through a future project.

The consultant will be responsible to design the study, including its methodology preferred/possible qualitative and quantitative research methods and tools could be proposed.

The deliverable should include a baseline study which will be used as a starting point in evaluation of project success at the end of project implementation.

The consultant is encouraged to organize data collection using digital technologies where possible.

5. Logistic and timeframe

The feasibility study is expected to be conducted **by November 5, 2023**.

The key task & phases are as follow:

- **Proposal phase:** the consultant will be requested to submit a proposal (including methodological approach, feasibility study matrix, baseline study methodological approach and the study matrix), work plan and a budget breakdown for MIOS Tuzla consideration. Deadline: **August 28, 2023 until 23.59h.**
- **Inception Phase:** upon approval of the feasibility study proposal, the consultant is expected to review the internal and external documents to develop a detailed methodology including the data collection tools (KII guides) and actual work plan.
- **Preparation & Field Phase:** In coordination with MIOS Tuzla and local partners, arrangement of interviews, stakeholder meetings and other data collection as relevant

- **Reporting Phase:** develop a feasibility study report as per MIOS Tuzla research guidelines, consolidate the feedback received from MIOS Tuzla and project donor and submit the final report. The contractor should be available for questions and call if there is a need. Deadline for draft of the feasibility and baseline study: **October 10, 2023**. Deadline for the final version of the feasibility study: **November 5, 2023** and the baseline study: **December 31, 2023**
- **Presentation or participation in the planning workshop:** the consultant might be requested to participate in the project design verification workshop (if relevant). Time period for the workshop: November 10 – 30, 2023.

MIOS staff will be available for:

- Project concept
- List of experts for interviews, incl. all necessary contact details, establishing contact if needed
- Overview of related earlier activities by MIOS Tuzla
- List of guiding questions
- Guiding questions for feasibility studies
- MIOS Tuzla Child and Adult Safeguarding policy

6. The study products/deliverables

The feasibility study should not exceed 50 pages (excl. data material, annexes, etc.) – 30 pages for feasibility study and 20 pages for baseline study written in English language and one of the official languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should contain the following chapters:

- a) Purpose, objectives and use of the feasibility study.
- b) Methodology of the study.
- c) Initial situation and problem analysis (on macro, meso, micro level) present the context of the planned project at all relevant levels (micro-, meso-, macro-) and also include essential, project-relevant data on the initial situation.
- d) Project executing agency in the partner country (local executing agency).
- e) Target groups and other actors (at micro, meso and macro level).
- f) Evaluation of the planned project according to OECD DAC criteria: analyse to what extent the

selected approach can contribute to solving the problem situation among the target groups and other actors. Support in setting of realistic objectives, feasibility of activities (see <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>).

- g) Recommendations: concrete recommendations for adjustments to the specific project concept, including impact matrix and measures, should be formulated as far as possible. The actors and stakeholders to be involved, suggestions for monitoring fields of outcome and impact measurement as well as opportunities and risks must be taken into account. Concrete recommendations for areas of capacity building within the project implementation.

7. Budget

The consultant individual/company is expected to submit financial proposal with the detailed work plan for the feasibility study. The budget should include any cost related to execute the study, any costs beyond the proposed budget will not be approved by MIOS Tuzla.

8. Organizational Requirements and Compliance

The consultant individual/company is expected to conduct the study in alignment to the ethical considerations while conducting research.

In addition, the contractor organization is expected to sign and implement the activities in full alignment to the MIOS Tuzla Child Safeguarding Policy. The contractor will be expected to submit CVs of the team lead within the proposal and any person hired within the partnership as part of the inception phase.

The contractor should be apolitical and work in respect of the MIOS Tuzla Policies, i.e. should be willing to provide services to all people regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, etc. It should be an individual/organization with no political affiliation or association with parties to a conflict. It must also enjoy positive relations with community members. In addition, if no prior experience with targeted community the partner must work towards building a positive relationship with the community.

The contractor will be responsible for its own arrangement for security, transportation, communications, accommodation and insurance. MIOS Tuzla will not be responsible for any transportation or security concerns.

9. Content of the offer

The proposal for the preparation of the feasibility study should contain the following:

- a) CV of the consultant with a description of relevant experience,
- b) proposal of the methodology that will be applied in the study,
- c) the time frame in which the study will be carried out and the phases of the work,
- d) draft content of the feasibility study,
- e) the price, i.e. the fee and terms of payment for the execution of the work,
- f) references of the organization relevant to the execution of the work.

10. Selection Criteria and Technical Expertise

- At least 5 years of expertise to carry out qualitative analysis related to the topic of this procurement.
- Strong conceptual and research/analytical skills with the ability to analyse data and information from various sources and produce coherent materials.
- Proven experience in performing similar tasks and proven competence and experience in conducting legal framework and social research; Or proven experience in organizing and implementing feasibility studies in general, identifying relevant sources of information, setting up questionnaires, etc.
- Educational background and understanding and knowledge of the topic of the interest e.g. formal education system, non-formal education system, education policies, school's organizational development, youth empowerment and social cohesion.
- Fluent in English.

- Technical competency to lead feasibility study and stakeholder analysis, project management and data quality control.
- Proof of education (university degree in a relevant subject).
- Use of digital technologies that eases the data collection.
- Understanding the context of education sector and educational landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina is desirable but not eliminatory.

11. Contact for further questions

For all possible questions, you can contact us only by email: the following persons:

1. Edina Malkić, director of MIOS Tuzla
e-mail: muios@bih.net.ba
2. Monika Kleck, consultant of the Freudenberg Foundation
e-mail: monivito@arcor.de