

United Nations Development Programme



Country: Republic of Moldova
Initiation Plan

Project Title: Improving the quality of education in the Republic of Moldova: pilot project in ATU Gagauzia

Expected UNDAF/CP Outcome(s): Outcome 2: The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities, decent work and productive employment, generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth.

Expected CPD Output(s): OUTPUT 2.2: Women, youth and people from regions with special status benefit from better skills, access to resources and sustainable jobs and livelihoods.

OUTPUT 2.3: Improved local public services and upgraded infrastructure to enhance accessibility to and boost resilient local economic development, including in regions with special status and across the conflict divide

Initiation Plan Start/End Dates: 11 May 2022 - 11 March 2023

Implementing Partner: United Nations Development Programme

Brief Description

With a view to support the advancement of the quality of education system in the Republic of Moldova, UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia (EC), is planning to improve the quality of educational process through advancing the use of digital tools and digital educational materials, and improving the school infrastructure, with emphasis on WASH.

The proposed action is designed around the two phased approach:

1. Provide ICT equipment and support the development of digital educational resources, and
2. Renovate the school infrastructure, with particular emphasis on WASH

Programme Period: 11/05/2022-11/03/2023

Atlas Project Number: 00143837

Atlas Output ID: 00131779

Gender Marker: GEN 2

Total resources required 335,500 USD

Total allocated resources:

- Regular 4,940 USD
- Other:
 - EC ATU Gagauzia 54,140 USD
 - Government of Romania 56,305 USD
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia 220,115 USD

UNDP

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Resident Representative

11-May-2022

Date: _____

I. PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTPUT

Background

The Covid-19 crisis affected the education sector to a high extent, with schools being sent to organize the education process remotely and teachers expected to have IT skills overnight to quickly navigate among the multiple online learning tools and materials. The crisis found the education sector unprepared to embrace this shift and also revealed a myriad of challenges which were otherwise overlooked or unmapped. The Covid-19 impact should be looked at from both, the perspective of addressing the immediate challenges, but also the need to take it as an opportunity to identify the shortcuts in advancing the education sector.

UNDP Moldova, in partnership with the Association of ICT Companies, supported the development of the education platform [studii.md](#) and education program [Tekwill in every school](#) starting in 2019, as a result of the Innovation Challenge competition to address education-sector challenges. Studii.md platform was created following the human centered design principle, which means it was designed together with teachers, school administrations, pupils and parents, making it user friendly for all and adapted to the local context and needs. Since education transferred to distance learning, the platform was adapted to respond to the emerging needs of schools and ensure a better organization of distance learning. Thus, it is now a platform that ensures not only electronic agendas, timetables, homework and the option to organize online lessons, but also the digital management of the school process, which covers automated evaluation and reporting on the education progress. Tekwill in every school is a learning program for youth, whose aim is to complement the traditional education and develop the skills in high demand on the labor market, applying modern teaching techniques. It will pilot 6 extracurricular courses starting Fall 2020.

However, data collected by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and sectorial CSOs reveal a gap when it comes to the possibility of schools, including teachers and pupils/students to **connect** and make use of these or any other platforms, both from home as well as from classrooms. In practical terms, it entails limited **capacities** of teachers to turn digital and adapt to the digital format the training techniques and content. It also means reduced possibilities to connect to it, which is of particular relevance for teachers or pupil/students belonging to vulnerable groups, having limited financial capacity to procure ICT equipment or to connect to the Internet. Digital solutions in learning also need **relevant content, adequate instructional models, effective teaching practices, and a supportive learning environment**¹.

Project description

The Covid-19 crisis has seriously affected the education sector. At the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, education institutions had to close and shift to distance learning while being completely unprepared. Poor endowment of schools with ICT equipment and broadband Internet, insufficient access to devices among students, the lack of teachers' skills to use ICT for teaching and the lack of interactive digital educational resources, among others, have negatively affected the capacity of the education sector to function effectively. Moreover, the poor sanitary facilities made many schools a place of hazard for children and staff in times of a public health and sanitary crisis. As a result, the Covid-19 crisis found the education sector totally unprepared to embrace this shift and also revealed a myriad of challenges which were otherwise overlooked or unmapped. Therefore, the Covid-19 impact should be looked at from both the perspective of addressing the immediate challenges, but also the need to identify some of the most pressing needs and use them for advancing the education sector. Finally, due to the fact that much of the global discourse is focusing on the fourth industrial evolution and the jobs of the future, making sure that pupils receive relevant education which prepares them well for being competitive on a global job market, this initiative focuses on STEM-related subjects, in attempt to make them more popular among pupils, but also make them easier to study and comprehend.

The proposed initiative aims to support the modernization of the education sector from two perspectives: improve the ability of schools to conduct studies online and improve their sanitary conditions. It builds on the inception phase conducted in ATU Gagauzia in the period January – December 2021, expanding the successful interventions, and using the lessons learned for providing meaningful results.

¹ UN Policy Brief: Education during Covid-19 and Beyond, August 2020, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf

Within the first component, the pilot-project aims at contributing to the modernization of the educational process through advancing their use of ICT for education. The main activities include providing schools with ICT equipment, training the teachers of STEM subjects in the area of digital pedagogy, making STEM online courses available to more schools in the region, supporting the development or upgrade of digital tools that facilitate online school management, and support the elaboration of digital educational resources for teachers and pupils.

The results expected of this initiative are:

1. Schools in ATU Gagauzia are better equipped with interactive ICT equipment which facilitates online and blended learning, and use increasingly the modern technology in the educational process.
2. Students and teachers have access to interactive high-quality digital educational resources for STEM subjects which facilitate students' learning and understanding.
3. The sanitary facilities in at least one education institution are renovated, and students, their parents, as well as teachers are increasingly aware of the need to respect basic hygiene rules.

SDG Contribution:

SDG 4 – Quality Education

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Expected results and impact

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Expected impact:

- Schools in the pilot region (ATU Gagauzia) more resilient to crisis situations;
- More pupils from ATU Gagauzia have access to quality education;
- Improved sanitary conditions for the pupils in ATU Gagauzia;

Indicative activities

Component 1: Under the first component, activities will focus on:

- Procuring ICT devices for schools;
- Support the development of digital educational resources;

Component 2: The second component will seek to:

- Build/renovate sanitary facilities in schools;

Partnerships:

Partnerships are key to ensuring not only the successful implementation of the intervention, but also the sustainability of the activities, the central and local authorities ensuring the ownership over the project products. The below partnerships are key:

- The **Ministry of Education and Research** – Improvements in the public education system shall be done in partnership with the Ministry, ensuring its (national) ownership to ensure sustainability of the

interventions. The proposed intervention will lay the grounds for scaling-up at the national level the piloted approach in establishing the e-learning infrastructure and content and partnering with the private sector.

- **The Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia** – UNDP has a positive history of cooperation with the Gagauzia regional authorities. The approaches and initiatives piloted in the region have been successfully continued by the EC and scaled up at the national level (for ex. the first ever LEADER approach in Moldova was piloted by UNDP in Gagauzia through the EU-funded SARD project, being later on successfully scaled up at the national level). EC's ownership has been always confirmed by the local contribution. For example, within the SARD project, the 3 M EUR EU allocation for small-scale infrastructure has been topped-up with the same amount by the regional and local authorities, while in the ongoing GBV project, the 90 K USD UNDP budget for the GBV Shelter has been topped up by the local contribution of 85 K USD, this confirming the ownership and commitment.

EC mentioned advancing the digitalization in education as one of their top priorities, along with ensuring the basic sanitary conditions in the schools. Local co-finance and full implementation support has been committed, this adding a lot to the project efficiency and further sustainability.

- **The General Directorate for Education, ATU Gagauzia** – the cooperation with the General Directorate for Education during the inception phase was very positive and productive. The Directorate is the project's main partner in the field, it has direct communication with school administrations, teachers, and students, respectively. All activities are coordinated with the Directorate and activities are conducted in close liaison.
- **Government of Estonia** – Estonia has been a model for Moldova in areas such as e-governance and digitalization. Even more so, many have dubbed Estonia as the most advanced digital society in the world. This resulted in increased efficiency and transparency of government, better public services, increased citizens' satisfaction and trust, as well as overall social and economic development and increased quality of life. Estonia has put digitalization of education as one of the top priorities in their countries long ago. Today, the educational outcomes of Estonia are among the best in Europe and in the world and are the best indicator of impact of the country's education policies. UNDP Moldova will partners with the Estonian government, through their Education and Youth Board, in order to learn from their experience and adapt the good practices to the Moldovan context.
- **UNICEF** has long term experience of supporting the national education system. Now it started the process of development of the National Education Sector Plan, to also include the long-term Education strategy 2030. UNDP will partner with UNICEF at the policy level and will involve UNICEF in the consultations around the integration of the vulnerable groups in the project activities.
- **UNFPA** has rich experience in conducting activities related to health education and WASH. Partnership with UNFPA will ensure the implementation of an educational campaign for the pupils in Gagauzia with respect to WASH.
- **Tekwill – the Center of Excellence in ICT** runs *Tekwill in Every School* educational programme aimed at advancing STEAM education throughout the country. Tekwill owns a e-learning platform which is used for the TIES programme, and is a valuable partner in terms of the knowledge and experience acquired in the promotion of STEAM education, elaboration of digital educational resources and their hosting, as well as teachers training.

II. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

UNDP Moldova will be responsible for project administration including: organising implementation of project activities, procurement of goods and services, recruitment of project personnel and national and international consultants, connecting to national and international expertise and knowledge networks etc., in order to ensure the timely and expedient implementation of project activities, including the provision of continuous feedback and information sharing among stakeholders.

The Project assurance will be ensured by Inclusive Growth Cluster Lead and Policy Specialist.

III. MONITORING

UNDP staff shall bear the primary responsibility for the monitoring and quality assurance of the Initiation Plan implementation. At the completion of the initiation phase, the UNDP staff shall prepare the Progress Report/ Initiation Phase Report, using the standard report format available.

IV. WORK PLAN

Period: 11 May 2022 - 11 March 2023

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME					RESPONSIBLE PARTY	Planned Budget			BUDGET 2022	Budget 2023	TOTAL BUDGET
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5		Funding Source	Budget Description	Account	Total 2022	Total 2023	
Output 1: 1.Schools in ATU Gagauzia have access to and have the necessary skills to use interactive ICT equipment and technologies that facilitates online and blended learning, and use increasingly the modern technology in the educational process. Gender Marker:2	1.2. Procurement of ICT devices for teachers and pupils from UTAG schools, based on the local needs.						UNDP	UNDP	ICT equipment and delivery (notebooks, tablets, cameras, microphones, etc)	72800			\$ -
								UTAG	ICT equipment and delivery (notebooks, tablets, cameras, microphones, etc)	72800			\$ -
								EST	ICT equipment and delivery (notebooks, tablets, cameras, microphones, etc)	72800	100,000		\$ 100,000
Sub-Total for Output 1										100,000	-	\$ 100,000	
Output 2: 2.Students and teachers have access to interactive high-quality digital educational resources for STEM subjects which facilitate students' learning and understanding.	2.1 Trainings teachers to develop digital educational materials						UNDP	UNDP	Communication Consultnat	71300			\$ 2,000
								UNDP	National education expert	71300	1,700	300	\$ 4,450
								UNDP	Logistics	75700	2,069	1950	\$ 4,019
	2.2. Create digital materials for at least one STEM course in general education							TBD	International Education expert	71200	10,000	0	\$ 10,000
								TBD	Individual consultants on digital resources	71300	20,000	3000	\$ 23,000
								TBD	Develop digital educational material for online and hybrid learning	72100	50,000	0	\$ 50,000
								TBD	ICT expert	71300	8,000	0	\$ 8,000
								UNDP	Communication	74200	2,000	0	\$ 2,000
								UNDP	Translations	74200	3,303	0	\$ 3,303
Sub-Total for Output 2										101,072	5,700	\$ 106,772	
Output 3: 3. The sanitary facilities in at least one education institution are renovated, and students, their parents, as well as teachers are increasingly aware of the need to respect basic hygiene rules.	3.1. - Renovation of sanitary facilities for at least one school from UTAG. 3.2. Student, teaching staff are aware of the need to respect basic hygiene standards within the shool premises						RO	Renovation of sanitary facilities	72100	46,788	-	\$ 46,788	
							UTAG	Renovation of schools	72100	50,000	0	\$ 50,000	
							RO	Logistics	75700	1,700	300	\$ 2,000	
							RO	Communication materials	74200	1,000	0	\$ 1,000	
SUB -Total (Activities and Project Management and Implementation Cost)										99,488	300	\$ 99,788	
DPC									74500	1,625	32	\$ 1,656	
									64300	3,788	76	\$ 3,864	
General Management Support									75100-8%	20,353	489	\$ 20,841	
									75100-5%	2,578		\$ 2,578	
TOTAL										328,904	6,596	\$ 335,500	