

Global Partnership for Education (GPE) 'System Transformation Grant' (STG) in Afghanistan (2025 to 2028)

Programme Evaluation (Baseline & Endline) Terms of Reference (ToR)¹

¹ Save the Children seeks to establish a contractual framework with a consulting firm capable of conducting both the Baseline Evaluation (2026) and Endline Evaluation (2028) of the GPE System Transformation Grant programme. Appointment for the Endline phase will be subject to satisfactory performance during the Baseline phase and Save the Children's sole discretion.

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1. PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Type of evaluation	Baseline Evaluation
Name of the programme	GPE System Transformation Grant (STG) Afghanistan (2025 to 2028)
Programme Start and End dates	01 November 2025 to 31 July 2028
Programme duration	33 months
Programme locations:	Kabul, Kunar, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Sar-e-pul, Faryab, Herat, Ghor and Samangan (9 Provinces)
Thematic areas	Education
Sub-themes	Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Community-Based Schooling (CBS) Pilot Access to Education for Out-of-School Children (OOSC) Alternative Learning Pathways for Adolescent Girls
Donor	Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Fund
Estimated beneficiaries	CBS: 7,280 Children (approximately 50% Girls) including children under catch-up classes and remedial classes ECCD: 10,800 Children (approximately 50% Girls) ALP: 1,260 (100% Girls) 566 teachers and 540 ECCD facilitators (approximately 72% Female)
The overall objective of the programme	The overall goal of the program is to ensure improved quality of learning pathways for children (girls and boys) and adolescents, especially the most marginalized, that are safe, inclusive, equitable, resilient, and responsive.
Partners	INGOs (3): World Vision International (WVI), Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) & Save the Children International (SCI). NNGOs (7): OCCD, SODC, WDIO, SGOA, HHOA, TEO, and TLO

2. INTRODUCTION

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) System Transformation Grant (STG) is a multi-year education programme implemented by Save the Children International (SCI) and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) as CO-Grantees to improve access to quality, inclusive, equitable, and resilient learning opportunities for children and adolescents in Afghanistan. Under SCI's grant allocation, the programme will be implemented from November 2025 to July 2028 across nine provinces through a consortium of international and national partners. The programme is aligned with the Afghanistan Education Sector Strategic Plan (AESSP) and focuses on expanding access to ECCD and Community-Based Schools (CBS), supporting alternative learning pathways for adolescent girls, improving education quality, and strengthening education systems and community engagement.

Save the Children intends to contract a single evaluation firm to undertake both the baseline and endline evaluations using a consistent methodological approach to maximise comparability over time. The baseline data collection should take place in October 2026. The endline should take place the same month as the baseline in 2027. The baseline will establish benchmark values for key indicators in the STG Results Framework and assess the current status of education access, learning, teaching quality, inclusion, child protection, and community participation across the target areas. The findings will inform programme planning, target validation, adaptive management, and future evaluation efforts, while providing a reference point for measuring progress and assessing programme impact over the life of the project. The endline will in turn measure changes against the baseline, assess programme achievements, explore sustainability and scalability of key interventions, and generate lessons for future programming.

Save the Children reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate the contract following completion of the baseline phase if performance, methodological quality, contractual compliance, safeguarding compliance, or deliverable quality are deemed unsatisfactory. Selection under this ToR does not constitute a guarantee that the endline phase will be commissioned.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Afghanistan's education sector continues to face severe challenges, as overlapping political, social, economic, and environmental shocks deprive millions of children of their right to education. The most affected are children in rural and underserved communities, girls, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. Since August 2021, the sector has been profoundly reshaped by directives issued by the de-facto-authorities (DfA), beginning with the ban on girls' secondary education in March 2022. This has excluded approximately 2.2 million adolescent girls from education, with an additional 397,000 girls prevented from continuing their studies each academic year. The situation has worsened following a December 2024 DfA directive banning women and girls from attending medical and health training institutes, including nursing, midwifery, and specialized medical courses.

According to UNESCO, more than 2.1 million primary school-aged children are out of school in Afghanistan, with around half of all primary-age children missing basic enrolment. Girls, children with disabilities, and those living in remote rural areas face the highest levels of exclusion due to poverty, a severe shortage of female teachers, and systemic failures in education service delivery caused by acute resource constraints.

Community-Based Education (CBE), previously a vital pathway for children in remote and underserved communities, reaching one million learners in 2023, has been severely disrupted by restrictive policies. Primarily implemented by non-state actors with donor funding, CBE has experienced major reductions in coverage, affecting thousands of children, particularly girls, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups unable to access public education services. Under the recently concluded GPE Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG), Save the Children supported more than 95,000 children (64% girls) across 13 provinces through CBE. A joint SCI-UNICEF CBE Transition Needs Assessment found that only 11 per cent of CBE learners who transitioned to public “hub” schools attended regularly, leaving many unable to continue their education. This assessment may serve as a reference for validating enrolment composition in Community-Based Schools (CBS) under the GPE Systems Transformation Grant (STG).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) remains critically underdeveloped, with less than 1% of children aged 3 to 5 enrolled in early learning programmes. Early Childhood Development (ECD) is similarly underfunded, with the 2022-2023 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey showing that only 29% of children aged 3 to 5 are developmentally on track.

To address the large numbers of out-of-school children and CBE learners unable to transition into public schools, an adapted Community-Based Schooling (CBS) model is being piloted under the STG during the 2026 academic year (end March to end December) by SCI, UNICEF, AKF, and CARE. An approach paper, jointly developed by the pilot agencies and endorsed by the Education Sector Coordination Platform, provides a harmonized framework for CBS implementation.

Afghanistan's education crisis also extends beyond access to learning quality and outcomes. According to the World Bank's 2024 report, learning poverty is among the highest in the world, with 93% of children completing primary education unable to read and understand a simple age-appropriate text. Learning outcomes are undermined by shortages of trained teachers, particularly female educators, inadequate teaching and learning materials, weak assessment and monitoring systems, and significant infrastructure gaps. Two recent large-scale Grade 3 learning assessments were conducted nationwide for public schools (by UNESCO and UNICEF) and CBE learners (by UNICEF and SCI), with the latter undertaken through the GPE ESPIG-funded CASL programme. The findings from both assessments can serve as proxy benchmarks for the CBS pilot under the GPE STG-funded programme.

In response to the education crisis, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) System Transformation Grant (STG) was designed to support the Afghanistan Education Sector Strategic Plan (AESSP) by improving access to education, enhancing learning quality, and strengthening education systems and community engagement. Under Save the Children

International's allocation, the programme will be implemented over 33 months, from November 2025 to July 2028, across nine provinces in partnership with international and national NGOs.

The programme is structured around three outcomes:

Outcome 1: Girls and boys have increased access to safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments. (Aligned with AESSP Strategic Goal 1: Access to Education).

Output 1.1: Increased enrolment of out-of-school children (OOSC) and CBE learners who couldn't transition to public schools in community-based school programs (through CBS).

Output 1.2: Learning spaces established, meeting context-relevant minimum standards for safe, inclusive and resilient infrastructure/ environment

Output 1.3: Afghan girls' have continued access to safe and inclusive learning opportunities, including alternative pathways.

Outcome 2: Improved quality of education across program supported learning spaces (Aligned with AESSP Strategic Goal 2: Education Quality).

Output 2.1: Learning spaces are adequately equipped to support safe, inclusive, and equitable teaching and learning.

Output 2.2: ECCD facilitators and teachers are motivated and have the professional capacities to provide quality care and teaching to children.

Output 2.3: Teachers and Learners are supported with the right materials to promote and enhance literacy, numeracy and socioemotional learning (SEL) for children.

Output 2.4: Learning environments remain safe, inclusive, and protective for all (communities, parents, caregivers, teachers and learners).

Outcome 3: Advanced progress towards AESSP goals and sector level strategic approaches.

Output 3.1: Enhanced capacity of NNGOs to ensure continued access and engagement with communities for effective delivery of planned education programs.

Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity of community institutions, such as shuras and MGs to actively support and co-manage CBS and ECCD.

Output 3.3: Collaborative technical platforms established and supports development and dissemination of relevant knowledge products and resources to support design adaptations and effective delivery of the ECCD and CBS interventions.

Output 3.4: Collaborative evidence generation to support sector-wide scale-up.

4. SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION (BASELINE & ENDLINE)

4.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

1. Establish baseline values for all agreed indicators.
2. Measure change at endline against baseline values.
3. Assess the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, coherence and potential scalability of programme interventions.

4. Generate evidence on access, quality, equity, inclusion, protection and learning outcomes.
5. Generate operational learning for future education programming in Afghanistan.
6. Generate evidence that is comparable, where feasible, with baseline and endline findings collected by other GPE System Transformation Grant implementing agencies operating in Afghanistan.

4.1.1 Baseline Objectives

The purpose of the baseline study is to establish benchmark values for the key outcome and output indicators of the GPE System Transformation Grant (STG) programme and generate robust evidence on the status of education **access, quality, equity, inclusion and protection** in the target areas at the start of programme implementation. Furthermore, the study will assess the **prevailing conditions, opportunities, and barriers** (including the structural ones) affecting children, adolescents, communities, education personnel, and local institutions, with particular attention to girls, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. It will also evaluate and generate evidence to support sector wide **scalability and sustainability** of key learning pathways under STG (ECCD & CBS pilot). The findings will validate programme assumptions, inform target setting, strengthen adaptive management, and provide a reference point for measuring programme results and impact throughout the implementation period.

In addition, the baseline and the endline will explore in detail and undertake a deep-dive assessment of key interventions being piloted and scaled under the STG programme portfolio. . The focus of the deep-dive at **baseline** will be to establish contextual conditions, needs, barriers and implementation readiness, while at **Endline** assess effectiveness, adoption, sustainability, scalability and outcomes resulting from implementation. The deep-dives will include:

- i- *Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) to assess their relevance, accessibility, inclusiveness, equitability, safety and community initiative potential for sustainability and sector wide scale-up*
- ii- *Community-Based Schooling pilot (CBS) to assess their relevance, accessibility, inclusiveness, equitability, safety and community leadership and ownership, potential for sustainability and sector wide scale-up.*
- iii- *Teacher professional development and foundational learning interventions, including teacher training, Learning Circles, Literacy Boost, Numeracy Boost, and socio-emotional learning (SEL), to assess their contribution to improved teacher wellbeing and motivation resulting in enhanced teaching quality and learning outcomes for students.*
- iv- *Structured capacity building of ECCD facilitators and caregivers to assess their contribution to improved motivation and capacity leading to enhanced care and development of children in ECCD centers.*
- v- *Localization and capacity strengthening of national NGOs and community institutions, including SMCs and Mothers' Groups, to assess their preparedness and capacity to support sustainable, community-led education service delivery in Afghanistan. Assess local NNGOS, community institutions (SMC, Mothers Groups) strengths, capacity gaps and map out areas of complementarity, collaboration and capacity building requirements.*

4.1.2 Endline Objectives

The Endline Evaluation will:

1. Measure progress against all baseline indicators.
2. Assess achievement of programme outcomes and outputs.
3. Assess sustainability of programme achievements.
4. Assess effectiveness of localisation and capacity-strengthening investments.
5. Assess scalability of CBS and ECCD models.
6. Examine unintended positive and negative outcomes.
7. Generate recommendations for future sector programming.

4.2 Indicators

The following are outcome & output indicators to be measured through this evaluation. All indicators included in the final approved evaluation matrix shall be measured at baseline and endline wherever methodologically appropriate. The consulting agency must ensure that endline measurement remains comparable with baseline data collection methods, sampling approaches, indicator definitions and disaggregation categories.

The evaluation firm shall furthermore ensure that indicator definitions, disaggregation categories, computation methods, and measurement approaches are aligned with those used by other GPE STG implementing agencies wherever possible and appropriate. The purpose is to facilitate aggregation, comparison, and cross-programme learning across the wider STG portfolio.

The consultancy shall review relevant indicator frameworks, tools, protocols, and guidance made available by Save the Children, AKF, GPE partners, and relevant sector coordination platforms before finalising the evaluation matrix.

RESULT STATEMENT	INDICATOR
Outcome 1: Girls and boys have increased access to safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments. (Aligned with AESSP Strategic Goal 1: Access to Education)	1) % increase in learners enrolled at each level (ECCD and CBS) (disaggregated by sex, age, disability, grade, type of school and province) 2) % of learners completing Early Childhood Education (ECE) and primary education (disaggregated by sex, age, disability, grade and province) 3) % Improvement in attendance of learners across the supported pathways (ECCD and CBS). Disaggregated by gender, age, disability, grade, province and type of school. 4) % of learning spaces meeting safety, inclusivity & learning continuity (including early warning systems) standards (as per CBS approach paper)

Outcome 2: Improved quality of education across program supported learning spaces (Aligned with AESSP Strategic Goal 2: Education Quality)	1) Percentage of children and young people (a) in Grade 2 or 3; and (b) at the end of primary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading, (ii) mathematics, and (iii) social emotional learning (SEL) (disaggregated by sex, age, disability and grade) 2) Percentage of young children aged 49-71 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial wellbeing (disaggregated by sex, age, and disability) 3) Percentage of targeted teachers or facilitators observed, that demonstrate teaching proficiency and competency (disaggregated by gender, disability, province & academic qualifications)
Outcome 3: Advanced progress towards AESSP goals and sector level strategic approaches	1) Gender Parity Index in access to formal and non-formal education opportunities for girls and boys (including children with disability) in marginalized and crises affected areas

4.2 Intended Audience and Use of the Study

The evaluation will serve accountability, learning and programme management purposes across both baseline and endline phases. The baseline findings will establish benchmark values for key STG indicators, validate programme assumptions, inform implementation planning, guide adaptive management, and provide a basis for measuring progress and impact throughout the project lifecycle. Endline findings will support programme close-out, donor reporting, evidence generation, future programme design and sector learning.

The primary intended audiences of the study are:

STAKEHOLDER	FURTHER INFORMATION
Programme donor	Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Fund
Primary implementing Organisation	Save the Children International (SCI)
CO-Grant agents	Save the Children and Aga Khan Foundation (AKF).
Implementing partners	All implementing partner organizations, national and international
Education actors	Education cluster, Donors, UN agencies, research and academic institutions and other education sector.
Beneficiaries	School representatives (Head Teachers, Teachers), Communities (Shuras), Children & Young persons, in forms accessible and aligned to the different audiences
DFA technical staff	Technical staff within the de-facto Ministry of Education (MoE) and PEDs where relevant

4.3 Key Evaluation Questions

The questions outlined below are indicative and may be refined, reworded, or prioritized by the consultant in consultation with Save the Children during the inception phase of the evaluation to ensure clarity, feasibility, and alignment with the study objectives.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS AT BASELINE	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS AT ENDLINE	LFA INDICATORS TO BE MEASURED	PEOPLE/GROUP (DATA SOURCE)	TOOLS TO BE USED (DATA COLLECTION TOOLS)
EFFECTIVENESS	- What is the current status of access, equity, inclusiveness, participation, learning outcomes, teaching quality, and system capacity in Community Based schools & ECCD centers in the target areas?	- To what extent has the programme contributed to improvements in access, participation, retention, inclusion, learning outcomes, teaching quality and local system capacity compared with baseline?	- <i>Number of girls and boys, including children with disabilities, enrolled in ECCD and CBS classes disaggregated by sex, age, disability, type (OOSC, dropout re-entry, continuation from CBE), and grade</i> - <i>Gender Parity Index in access to formal and non-formal education opportunities for girls and boys (including children with disability) in marginalized and crises affected areas</i> - <i>Literacy and numeracy rates?</i>	- Learners, teachers, facilitators, school records, attendance registers, classroom observations	<i>The tools selection will be finalized by the evaluation agency during the finalization of the Inception Report, in coordination and alignment with other implementing agencies</i>
RELEVANCE	- To what extent are the STG interventions aligned with the needs and priorities of children, adolescent girls, communities, and education stakeholders? - To what extent were classroom locations identified, selected & endorsed based on local needs?	- To what extent did the programme remain relevant throughout implementation and adapt to changing educational, social and policy contexts?	- Number of girls enrolled in alternative learning pathways. - Community demand and acceptance for CBS, ECCD, and alternative learning pathways	- Adolescent girls, parents, caregivers, community leaders, SMCs, MoE representatives	

SUSTAINABILITY	- To what extent are local structures and systems prepared to sustain programme interventions?	- How likely are programme benefits to be sustained after programme completion, and what factors will influence sustainability?	- Number of NNGOs with capacities and systems to implement education programmes - Number of Shuras/SMTs actively supporting education management - Functionality of SMCs and Mothers' Groups	- NNGOs, SMCs, Mothers' Groups, community representatives, education authorities
EFFICIENCY	- What existing capacities, resources, and systems are available to support effective programme implementation?	- How efficiently were programme resources utilised to achieve results?	- Number of learners with access to grade-appropriate learning materials - Capacity status of NNGOs and community structures	- Teachers, school management, NNGOs, implementing partners, programme staff
LEARNING	- To what extent are findings comparable with evidence generated by other STG-funded programmes and implementing agencies, and what lessons emerge across implementation models?	- What lessons emerged from implementation, adaptation and delivery that should inform future programming and sector policy?		
ACCEPTABILITY	- To what extent is the programme accepted by local community/stakeholders?		- Number/proportion of girls interested in alternative learning pathways	- Parents/caregivers, community leaders, adolescent girls and SMCs
CHILD PARTICIPATION	- To what extent are children's views, priorities, and learning needs reflected in	- To what extent were children's views incorporated into programme		- Children (girls, boys, CwDs), adolescent girls through surveys and FGDs

	existing education services?	implementation and improvement?	
	-		
SAFE PROGRAMMING	- What protection, safeguarding, and accountability mechanisms currently exist in learning spaces and communities?	- To what extent did programme interventions strengthen safe, inclusive and accountable learning environments?	- Learners, parents, teachers, SMCs, community members
GENDER EQUALITY & DISABILITY INCLUSION	- What barriers and opportunities exist for girls and children with disabilities to access and participate in education? -	- To what extent did programme interventions improve equitable participation and outcomes for girls and children with disabilities?	- Girls, boys, children with disabilities, caregivers, teachers, community representatives
EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIP	- What is the current capacity of NNGOs and community structures to deliver and sustain education services?		- NNGOs, SMCs, Mothers' Groups, education authorities, implementing partners
CROSS-STG LEARNING & COMPARABILITY	- What baseline values can be generated using harmonised indicators and tools shared across STG implementing agencies?	- To what extent are the programme's results consistent with, or different from, findings reported by other STG implementers, and what lessons emerge across the portfolio?	- Harmonised indicators; common tools; cross-programme synthesis

5. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

5.1 Evaluation design

The programme evaluation study will use a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a clear understanding of the education situation in the target areas at the start of the STG programme. The study will establish baseline values for relevant indicators in the STG Results Framework and assess the current status of education access, Equity, participation, learning outcomes, teaching quality, inclusion, child protection, community engagement, and local capacity.

Quantitative data will be collected through surveys, assessments, and school-level data to establish benchmark values against which programme progress can be measured during future reviews and evaluations, such as CBS feasibility study and STG endline. Qualitative data will be collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and consultations with key stakeholders to better understand the barriers, opportunities, and contextual factors affecting education outcomes.

The study will also include a deeper assessment of key STG interventions, including Community-Based Schooling (CBS), Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), alternative learning pathways for adolescent girls, ECCD facilitators and caregivers' capacity building, teacher professional development, inclusive education, and localization outcomes. Findings from the baseline will inform programme implementation, target setting, monitoring, learning, and adaptive management throughout the programme cycle.

Some of the country level assessments, resources and globally used tools and standards to be referenced are:

- 1- The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) will be used to assess early learning outcomes of ECCD children across key developmental domains. (Save the Children tool)
- 2- Afghanistan Education Situation Report 2025 (UNICEF & UNESCO)
- 3- Public school students learning outcome (Conducted from the public hub school grade 3 students in 2025 by the UNESCO)
- 4- CBE students learning outcome (Conducted jointly by SCI & UNICEF from CBE grade 3 students in 2025-2026)
- 5- AESSP 2026-2027
- 6- Literacy boost & numeracy boost (Save the Children tool)
- 7- Socia Emotional Learning (Save the Children tool)

Wherever possible, recognised sector tools already agreed by the CBS and ECCD pilot working groups should be prioritised over bespoke tools developed solely for this evaluation.

5.2 Sampling

The sampling approach for the Baseline evaluation will be proposed by the external evaluation consultancy, informed by the quantitative target table presented below. The proposed sampling will be subject to review and approval by the SCI Technical Team and, once approved, will be applied for the purposes of this evaluation.

The evaluation methodology shall include:

- Quantitative Survey to assess the progress against the outcome indicators stated above.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with learners and adults, and other relevant stakeholders to explore success, challenges, and lessons learned for future programming. The total number of FGD to be conducted will be proposed by the evaluator and agreed with the SCI Technical Team.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with relevant stakeholders which are to be finalized during the inception meeting. The total number of KIs to be conducted will be proposed by the evaluator and agreed with the SCI Technical Team.
- A Learning Workshop to identify the best learning to inform future programme design.

Sample size and resourcing: Consultants are responsible for calculating an appropriately powered and statistically representative sample size, taking into account the proposed sampling design, clustering/design effect, weighting, expected non-response/attrition, and any other relevant design parameters. Proposed budgets submitted at EOI stage should reflect the resources required to implement the study using the proposed sample. Any errors, omissions, or underestimation in sample size calculations that result in insufficient resourcing will be the responsibility of the consultant and will not constitute grounds for additional funding, contract variations, or reductions in the agreed methodological standards.

5.2.1 Targets Table

	Overall	Girls/Women	Boys/Men
ECCD children	10,800	5,400	5,400
Mothers' groups	8,100	8,100	0
Parents	2,700	1,350	1,350
ECCD centers	540		
ECCD facilitators	540	540	0
CBS	7,280	3,640	3,640
SMS	909	455	454
CBS	26		
CBS Teachers	229	114	115
Learning Circles for CBS teachers	9	243	243

<i>Teachers supported through learning circles</i>	486	243	243
<i>Remedial classes</i>	306		
<i>Remedial students</i>	6,120	3,060	3,060
<i>Children with disability (CWD)</i>	609	304	305

5.3 Data Sources and Data Collection Methods / Tools

The baseline study will use both primary and secondary data sources to establish baseline values for the STG programme indicators and understand the current education situation in the target areas. Primary data will be collected through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, learner assessments, school assessments, classroom observations, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with learners, teachers, caregivers, community representatives and implementing partners.

All tools and approaches must be child-friendly, gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive, culturally appropriate, and ethically sound. Data should be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and location wherever possible.

The study will also review secondary sources such as the STG logframe, project design documents, EMIS data, existing assessments, and education sector reports to support data triangulation and analysis. A validation workshop will be conducted with key stakeholders to review and validate the findings.

Save the Children may provide relevant guidance and tools to assess the indicators. The consultant is expected to share the evaluation matrix indicating how different DAC questions and indicators are to be measured.

5.4 Ethical considerations

5.4.1 Ethics Committee Approval

The inception report will be submitted to Save the Children's Ethics Review Committee, and ethics approval will be sought prior to data collection. The consulting agency must outline how they will consider the following:

- Safety of all the respondents including children throughout the evaluation stages
- Set out an approach to demonstrate compliance with international good practice and standards for research ethics and protocols particularly with regards to safeguarding children, vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities) and those in fragile and conflict affected states

- A clear documentation of comprehensive data protection measures as per General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines
- Ensuring all evaluation activities follow Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy, including safe data collection practices, informed consent/assent, and referral mechanisms for any disclosures of harm.
- The evaluation will be designed and implemented with sensitivity to the fragile and conflict-affected context of Afghanistan, avoiding harm, minimizing risk, and ensuring neutrality and do-no-harm principles.
- Tools and methods will be adapted to ensure safe, inclusive participation of girls and women, with attention to the context and cultural appropriateness.
- The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines. Participation will be voluntary, and respondents will not receive any financial or in-kind incentives for taking part.

5.4.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent for all adult participants will be obtained from each individual respondent and parental consent/permission for the child to participate in the evaluation and assessments will be obtained from their parents/caregivers/teachers and consent will be obtained from the child respondents. In addition, verbal informed consent will be taken prior to all assessments, based on predeveloped proper informed consent, parental consent and child assent.

5.4.3 Confidentiality and Data Protection Plan

All enumerators will be trained on child safeguarding and basic knowledge of Gender & disability inclusion ahead of data collection. Feedback mechanisms will be put in place to ensure safeguarding, anonymity, and confidentiality (to safeguard the participant's data, keeping it away from third-party access) throughout the Evaluation extra to this the enumerators will be trained on mandatory policies including data protection procedures.

In addition, all collected data will be anonymised through redaction and, where necessary, alteration of identifiable details to ensure that children cannot be identified. Data will be securely stored with restricted access and retained only for a defined period in line with organisational data protection policies, after which it will be safely deleted. The best interests of the child will be prioritised throughout the evaluation, ensuring that no harm arises from participation.

5.5 Harmonisation and comparability requirements

The consulting agency shall design the evaluation to maximise comparability:

- across baseline and endline measurement points;
- across provinces;
- across implementing partners;
- and, where feasible, across other GPE STG-funded programmes operating in Afghanistan.

Prior to finalising tools, the consulting agency will review any common measurement frameworks, indicator definitions, survey modules, learning assessment tools, disability inclusion measures, and GESI instruments agreed by the STG consortium, technical working groups, or grant agents.

6. BASELINE SCHEDULE AND DELIVERABLES

The baseline deliverables and tentative timeline (subject to the commencement date of the Evaluation and discussion with selected evaluator) are outlined below:

Activity	Duration	Deadline	Responsible
INCEPTION PHASE			
The external consultant is contracted and the evaluation team commences work	Week 1	10/09/2026	SCI & Selected Consulting Agency
Literature Review (LR)	Week 1	13/09/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
The evaluation team will facilitate a workshop with the relevant stakeholders to develop the inception report ⁽¹⁾	Week 2	20/09/2026	Selected Consulting Agency with support from SCI and other implementing partners
Submission of the Inception Report ⁽²⁾ and evaluation tools in line with the template provided ⁽³⁾ The inception report must include a "comparability matrix" showing: - indicators proposed for measurement; - definition source; - proposed tool; - alignment with other STG implementers; - alignment with baseline/endline requirements.	Week 3	24/09/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
ERC/Ethics Review and Approval Process. Field work is contingent upon ethics approval	Weeks 4-5	02/10/2026	SCI with support from the Selected Consulting Agency
Translation of the evaluation tools into Dari & Pashto, and digitization of the tools	Weeks 4-5	05/10/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Training of the Data Collectors	Weeks 5-6	08/10/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Pre-testing the tools	Weeks 5-6	08/10/2026	Selected Consulting Agency

Finalization of data collection tools, including survey instruments and data collection mechanism	Week 6	11/10/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS			
Data Collection including field monitoring and data quality assurance. <u>Data</u> collection must be completed by mid November before classes stop for exams	Weeks 7-10	12/11/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Data Clean-up	Weeks 8-10	15/11/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Data Analysis	Weeks 8-10	19/11/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Data and analyses including all encrypted raw data, do files/syntaxes databases, and analysis outputs submitted to Save the Children	Week 10	20/11/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
VALIDATION & REPORTING			
DRAFT Evaluation Report submitted (recommended 35-40 pages)	Weeks 11-12	26/11/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Evaluation Working Group (EWG) review and feedback. Consolidated comments will be provided to the consultant	Week 13	04/12/2026	EWG coordinated by Evaluation Manager
REVISED Evaluation Report submitted	Week 14	10/12/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
SCUK Member Office review. Consolidated comments will be provided to the consultant	Week 15	15/12/2026	Member Office colleagues
EWG second review and feedback. Consolidated comments will be provided to the consultant	Week 15	17/12/2026	EWG with coordinated by evaluation manager
FINAL Evaluation Report submitted	Week 16	21/12/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Final report review and sign off including management response	Week 16	23/12/2026	SCI coordinated by evaluation manager & programme team.
Powerpoint presentation of evaluation findings and Evidence to Action brief ⁽⁴⁾	Week 17	24/12/2026	Selected Consulting Agency
Dissemination of the report	TBC		SCI PMU

The endline schedule will mirror the baseline one, but aren't included here for brevity. For the endline, it will be particularly important for the data collection phase to happen in the same calendar month as the baseline; however, there will be room to discuss the schedule for other activities.

Notes on Deliverables:

- 1) All documents are to be produced in MS Word format and provided electronically by email to the relevant SCI-GPE- PMU MEAL Manager. In this case the evaluation

manager will work under the guidance of GPE PMU-DCoP and will actively collaborate with the head of REALM and other technical advisors. Copies of all PowerPoint presentations used to facilitate briefings for the programme should also be provided to save the children in editable digital format.

- 2) The inception report should include
 - i. Study objectives, scope and key study questions
 - ii. Description of the methodology, including design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, data sources, and Evaluation matrix against the key Evaluation questions
 - iii. Data analysis and reporting plan
 - iv. Data quality assurance measures/plan
 - v. Caveats and limitations of the Evaluation
 - vi. Risks and mitigation plan
 - vii. Ethical considerations including details on assent and consent
 - viii. Do no harm & safeguarding plan
 - ix. Data protection plan
 - x. Stakeholder and children communication and engagement plan
 - xi. Key deliverables, responsibilities, and timelines
 - xii. Resource requirements
 - xiii. Data collection tools (in line with the Evaluation objectives)
- 3) All reports are to use the Save the Children Evaluation Report template, available from the GPE MEAL Manager. Please also refer to Save the Children technical writing guide that will be shared during the report writing stage.
- 4) The Evidence to Action Brief is a 2-4-page summary of the full report and will be created using the Save the Children Management Response template.

7. REPORTING AND GOVERNANCE

The evaluation team lead (consulting agency) will provide reporting against the evaluation plan. The following regular reporting and quality review processes will also be used:

- Weekly verbal update / reporting to the designated evaluation manager of SCI.
- Evaluation Working Group (EWG) meetings which the consultant shall attend, will take place bi-weekly to discuss any challenges and emerging issues.
- Any communication with programme team must go through the programme MEAL Lead.

Save the Children intends, subject to satisfactory baseline performance, to utilise the same consulting firm for the endline phase in order to maximise methodological consistency, institutional memory, and value for money.

However, Save the Children reserves the right, at its sole discretion and without obligation, to:

- discontinue the arrangement after completion of the baseline phase;

- re-tender the endline evaluation;
- revise the scope of the endline evaluation; or
- negotiate revised commercial terms before commissioning the endline phase.

8. INDICATIVE BUDGET AND SCHEDULE OF PAYMENT

The indicative total budget available for this assignment is approximately **USD 70,000** inclusive of all professional fees, fieldwork costs, travel, translation, training, data collection, analysis, reporting, and all other associated costs required to complete both the Baseline Evaluation and Endline Evaluation phases. Applicants are expected to propose methodologies that are technically robust, proportionate, and represent good value for money within this budget envelope. Applications will be scored against the criteria below. The following payments will be made to the consultant using and agreed mode of payment:

BASELINE

- Upon approval of inception report and tools: [20%]
- Upon submission of First Draft baseline Report: [30%]
- Upon approval of final baseline report and evidence to action brief, based on meeting scoring criteria and report length/other requirements indicated in the present TOR: [50%]

ENDLINE

- Upon approval of inception report and tools: [20%]
- Upon submission of First Draft endline Report: [30%]
- Upon approval of final baseline report and evidence to action brief, based on meeting scoring criteria and report length/other requirements indicated in the present TOR: [50%]

9. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT OF THE CONSULTING AGENCY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Interested consultants will be required to submit an Expression of Interest in line with the provided template (see Annex), which should demonstrate adherence to the following requirements. Consultants can send clarification questions to the commissioning manager. They can include any feedback or concern about the TOR itself, if deemed necessary, in their application, which could be taken into account if necessary, including leading to an amendment of the TOR before finalisation of the contract.

Understanding of Requirements and Experience

To be considered, the study team members together must have demonstrated skills, expertise and experience in:

- Minimum 8–10 years of experience in conducting evaluations, including baselines-endlines, in protracted crises and/or development contexts with INGOs, UN agencies, or similar organizations.

- Proven track record in field implementation of household and school based surveys, FGDs, and KIIs in complex or fragile settings.
- Experience in partnership management and ensuring accountability in project delivery, including managing a range of government, non-government, community stakeholders
- Demonstrated experience conducting both baseline and endline evaluations of multi-year education programmes.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain methodological consistency across longitudinal or repeated evaluation exercises.
- Familiarity with education sector programming in Afghanistan or comparable regions.
- A good understanding of Gender, Disability & Social Inclusion as well its application in conducting evaluations.
- Demonstrated ability to deliver high-quality outputs under tight deadlines.
- Prior involvement in report writing and donor submissions.
- Adequate staffing capacity and logistical arrangements to cover the required sample size.
- Commitment to safeguarding and ethical standards in data collection.
- Possession of an active license/registration as a recognized consultancy or research organization, ensuring legal compliance.
- A mandatory requirement is the physical in-country presence of the Lead Consultant during critical phases of the evaluation, including inception, field data collection, and validation of findings.

There is a high expectation that:

- Members (or a proportion) of the study team have a track record of previously working together.
- A team leader will be appointed who has the seniority and experience in leading evaluations, and who has the ability and standing to lead a team toward a common goal.
- The team has the ability to commit to the terms of the project and have adequate and available skilled resources to dedicate to this study over the period.

10. FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

Save the Children seeks value for money in its work. This does not necessarily mean "lowest cost", but quality of the service and reasonableness of the proposed costs. Proposals shall include personnel allocation (role / number of days / daily rates / taxes), as well as any other applicable costs.

Criterion
Technical quality of methodology
Relevant organisational experience
Team composition and expertise
Understanding, and experience of, Afghanistan education context

Value for money

Note

Applicants must apply caution when using outputs from generative AI tools to develop applications. In line with current sector good practice, applicants and applications are expected to be transparent where they have used generative AI tools in the development of an application. This information will not affect the assessment process. Applicants must ensure that AI generated material does not contain any information that is falsified, fabricated, or misrepresented.

ANNEXES (SEPARTELY ATTACHED)

Annex 1: Project Logframe

Annex 2: Approved programme document

Annex 3: List of policies that must be followed

Full policy available on Request -

- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Ethical Research Guidance

Annex 4: SCI Evaluation Scoring for perspective consultants

Annex 5: Expression of Interest template

Annex 4: SCI Evaluation Scoring for perspective consultants

Category	Evaluation Quality Criteria (used for internal scoring after completion)
Purpose, Design and Methods	1. Does the evaluation report clearly identify the evaluation's purpose (including its key objectives, questions and criteria) as set out in the evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToR)?
	2. Are the data collection and analysis methods a clearly justified approach to addressing the evaluation's purpose and questions? (Do they provide valid, reliable and ethical data?)
	3. Is the methodology suitably tailored to the context and population groups to which the evaluation questions relate (e.g. re gender, disability, socio-economic status, geographic location, cultural context, ethnicity)?
	4. Is the size and composition of the sample in proportion to the conclusions sought by the evaluation?
	5. Does the evaluation build on what is already known, for example existing tried and tested frameworks and tools, existing data/evidence, and previous lessons learned?
	6. Are the methods used to collect and analyse data and any limitations of the quality of the data and collection methodology explained and justified?
	7. Has any personal and professional influence or potential bias among those collecting or analysing data been recorded and addressed or mitigated ethically?
Analysis and Findings	8. If evaluating impact, is a point of comparison used to show that change has happened (eg. a baseline, a counterfactual, comparison with a similar group)?
	9. Is the explanation of how (e.g. theory of change, logframe, activities) the intervention contributes to change explored?
	10. Is the data well triangulated, such as by using different data collection methods, types of data and stakeholder perspectives?
	11. Are alternative factors (eg. the contribution of other actors) considered to explain the observed result alongside an intervention's contribution?
	12. Are unintended and unexpected changes (positive or negative) identified and explained?

Communication and Use	13. Are the perspectives of children & communities included in the evidence, including the most deprived and marginalised? Note: For evaluations focused on young children, caregiver perspectives are adequate instead.
	14. Are the findings disaggregated according to sex, disability and other relevant social differences?
	15. Is there a clear logical link between the data that was collected and analysed, and the conclusions and recommendations presented?
	16. Are conflicting findings and divergent perspectives presented and explained in the analysis and conclusions?
	17. Are the findings and conclusions of the assessment shared with and validated by a range of key stakeholders (eg. communities, partners, Save the Children staff)?
	18. Is the analysis and interpretation of the data well communicated through accessible language and helpful visuals (diagrams, graphs, tables as needed)?
	19. Are references, annexes and links included that provide additional relevant data, analysis or references (including key documents and which individuals/stakeholders were involved)?
	20. Is there a clear plan for how to use the results, including recommendations that are 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound) and directed toward the appropriate 'end users', a dissemination plan, and specific actions for implementing these recommendations?

Annex 5: Expression of Interest template

Who can I contact if I have a question or comment about this document?

Please contact fatema.yousofzai@savethechildren.org

Expression of Interest for GPE STG 'System Transformation Grant' in Afghanistan (2025 to 2028) Programme Evaluation (Baseline & Endline)

Section A: General Information

First Name:	Last Name:
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Contact Address:				
Country:		Contact Phone: (+Area Code)		
Email address (mandatory):				
Applicant Status: (Please tick one)	Private Individual	Organization less than 10 staff	Organization More than 10 staff	Other Please Specify
If Private company or Other, Who will be main Lead for this call?				

- *Lead contact for this proposal*
- *Brief organisational profile relevant to this assignment*

Section B: Proposal: Methodology and Approach

Maximum length: 2 pages

Describe:

1. *Your understanding of the STG programme and evaluation objectives.*
2. *Key methodological challenges and risks.*
3. *How you would ensure comparability:*
 - a. *between baseline and endline results;*
 - b. *across implementing partners;*
 - c. *with other GPE STG implementing agencies operating in Afghanistan.*
4. *Key assumptions underpinning your proposed approach.*

This section will contribute to assessment of technical quality.

Section C: TECHNICAL APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Maximum length: 4 pages

Describe:

C1. Evaluation Design

- *Proposed evaluation design.*
- *Mixed-methods approach.*
- *Justification for proposed design.*

C2. Indicator Measurement

Explain how you will:

- *measure baseline indicators;*
- *ensure comparability at endline;*
- *align indicators with common STG frameworks and tools where applicable.*

C3. Sampling

Provide:

- *proposed sampling strategy;*
- *rationale;*
- *proposed sample sizes.*

C4. Quality Assurance

Explain:

- *data quality controls;*
- *field supervision arrangements;*
- *data cleaning procedures;*
- *triangulation methods.*

C5. Ethics and Safeguarding

Describe:

- *safeguarding approach;*
- *child participation approach;*
- *informed consent procedures;*
- *data protection measures.*

This section will be assessed against the technical methodology criterion

Section D: Project Management

Maximum length: 2 pages

Describe:

D1. Team Structure

Provide:

- *organogram;*
- *team composition;*
- *roles and responsibilities.*

D2. Project Management

Explain:

- *management arrangements;*
- *communication processes;*
- *quality control arrangements;*
- *risk management approach.*

D3. Availability

Confirm availability for:

- *Baseline Evaluation (2026);*
- *Endline Evaluation (2028).*

Include a statement confirming willingness to undertake both phases if contracted.

Attach abbreviated CVs (maximum 3 pages per individual) in an annex.

This section contributes to Team Composition and Expertise scoring.

Section E: Experience

Maximum length: 3 pages

Describe organisational experience relevant to:

E1. Similar Evaluations

Provide examples of:

- *baseline evaluations;*
- *endline evaluations;*
- *multi-year programme evaluations.*

E2. Education Sector Experience

Provide examples relevant to:

- *education programming;*
- *learning assessments;*
- *ECCD;*
- *community-based education;*
- *girls' education.*

E3. Afghanistan and Fragile Context Experience

Provide examples of work undertaken:

- *in Afghanistan;*
- *or in comparable fragile and conflict-affected contexts.*

E4. Inclusion Experience

Provide examples demonstrating experience with:

- *GESI assessments;*
- *disability inclusion;*
- *child participation;*
- *safeguarding.*

Include a statement confirming willingness to undertake both phases if contracted.

Attach abbreviated CVs (maximum 3 pages per individual) in an annex.

This section contributes to Team Composition and Expertise scoring

Please indicate below at least five recent studies you have undertaken in the last 3 years, explaining what type of services you provided (submit copies as well, if possible), as relevant Required Experience Table

Provide details of up to five relevant assignments completed within the past five years.

This section contributes to:

- *Relevant organisational experience*
- *Afghanistan/context knowledge*

Organisation to which services were provided	Value of programme evaluated in US\$ (rough value, if necessary)	Country	Year	Services offered e.g. Final Evaluation, Mid-term evaluation etc.	Contact details for references:

Section F: Budget

Save the Children seeks value for money in our work. This does not necessarily mean "lowest cost", but also considers the quality of the service being provided. The proposal will be assessed against the coverage and reasonableness of personnel allocations and rates, along with overall cost elements. This means that personnel allocations and rates have comprehensive coverage of costing elements/units and adequacy of budgeting into specific costing elements. The allocated amounts, unit cost and number of required units should be reasonable to achieve the objectives of this study and those amounts are necessary to achieve the objectives of the evaluation effectively. The budget line items are relevant for the successful implementation of the activities of the whole study process. There are no unnecessary or unrelated cost elements (to achieve the objectives of this study) being budgeted for.

Maximum length: 2 pages narrative plus budget annex

F1. Value for Money Statement

Maximum 1 page.

Explain:

- *how resources are allocated efficiently;*
- *how fieldwork costs are optimised;*
- *how quality is maintained while controlling costs;*
- *why the proposal represents good value for money.*

F2. Financial Proposal

Provide:

Baseline Budget

Separate total.

Endline Budget

Separate total.

Combined Budget

Total cost of both phases.

Budget Assumptions

Include:

- *inflation assumptions;*
- *exchange-rate assumptions;*
- *travel assumptions;*
- *security assumptions.*

1) *Proposals will be judged against reasonableness of the proposed costs.*

Use and adapt the table below to outline how much time has been allocated for the proposed team members to complete the required activities and deliverables. Indicate the type and number of personnel allocated, for example 1x5 days (one individual for 12 days = 12 days) or 3x10 days (three individuals for 10 days each = 30 days).

Role / number of days / daily rates. If applicable, also includes other applicable costs.

Activity/ Deliverable	Project personnel - baseline	Other (e.g. travel/accomodation - specify) - baseline	Project personnel - endline	Other (e.g. travel/accomodation - specify) - endline	[Add columns as needed]
Stage 1					

Sub Total					
Stage 2					
Sub Total					
Stage 3					
Sub Total					
TOTAL (All Stages)					

Section F: Declarations Eol Submission details:

SECTION G: DECLARATIONS

Maximum length: 1 page

The applicant must confirm:

- *Independence from the programme being evaluated.*
- *No actual or perceived conflicts of interest.*
- *Compliance with safeguarding requirements.*
- *Compliance with data protection requirements.*
- *Ability to obtain required permissions.*
- *Acceptance that Save the Children reserves the right to:*
 - *commission only the baseline phase;*
 - *terminate the arrangement following baseline completion;*
 - *re-tender the endline phase;*
 - *negotiate revisions to scope, budget or timelines before commissioning the endline phase.*

Please mention the name and contact details of the person submitting the proposal

Name :

Email Address: