
Terms of Reference
BHCIP: Technical Assistance for Capacity Developing BAEC to
establish and manage Large-Scale Assessment System in Balochistan and
Administer Provincial Achievement Test

INTRODUCTION

Following a Functional Review and Capacity Building Assessment of the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission (BAEC) in 2023, the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Balochistan Human Capital Investment Project (BHCIP), funded by the World Bank, is seeking to engage technical assistance (TA) to build the BAEC capacity to conduct provincial large-scale assessments (PLSA), including meta-analysis and research.

BACKGROUND:

The province of Balochistan faces significant challenges in the education sector. Despite ongoing efforts, student learning outcomes remain low. Recognizing this, the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-2025 outlines a comprehensive strategy for improvement, with a central goal of enhancing learning outcomes of students.

One of the key obstacles identified in BESP 2020-2025 is the lack of a clear understanding and practice on standardized assessment and the process for conducting large-scale assessments aligned with student learning outcomes (SLOs). The current traditional assessment system makes it difficult to accurately measure student progress and identify areas for improvement. Consequently, it hinders the School Education Department's ability to ensure that educational practices are effectively equipping students with the necessary knowledge, understanding and application.

The Capacity Development Plan for BAEC identified the need for enhanced capacity of BAEC to develop and conduct PLSA.¹ It is believed that a robust assessment system, aligned with SLOs, is crucial for periodic monitoring of progress towards BESP goals to ensure effective educational practices throughout Balochistan.

In the last five years, BAEC received capacity building trainings on:

- Capacity Building in Student Assessment through Aga Khan University – Examination Board (AKU-EB) in 2018-20.
- Training in Research in 2019-20 by AKU-EB.
- Training of Master Trainers in 2019-20 by AKU-EB.
- Development of Item Bank for Alternate Learning Program in 2020.
- Item bank development for primary level classes supported by BESP-PMU in 2019-2020.
- Members of the BAEC have participated in item writing capacity building workshops organized for the National Achievement Test (NAT) 2023 by Pakistan Institute of Education, MoFE&PT.

OBJECTIVE:

The objectives of the activities under this ToRs are:

¹ In 2024-25 BHCIP will support BAEC on large-scale assessment, while UNICEF will support the Directorate of Education (Schools) on formative and summative assessment practices in schools.

1. Develop and enhance the technical capacity of BAEC to independently conduct PLSA based on international best practice for grades 4 and 8 in English, Urdu, Science and Mathematics.
2. Strengthen the capacity of BAEC staff and share knowledge on international best practice, enhancing their required skills to plan, design, and implement PLSA studies.
3. Engage BAEC in the development of the student assessment framework (SAF) for PLSA and ensure that the faculty acquires the knowledge and skills to develop SFA for future PLSAs.
4. Strengthen the capacity of BAEC's assessment staff to conduct all stages of PSLA², from panning to feedback on the final report. This capacity strengthening will be done through training workshops, development of guidelines (guiding documents), and coaching through practical assessment activities that will enable staff to develop the necessary skills.
5. Support BAEC with the item analysis (pilot stage), followed by data collection, management, cleaning, analysis, and report writing for final PLSA. This will include preparation of scoring guides, psychometric analysis, and data summaries, data interpretation, and developing recommendations useful for policymakers and other stakeholders.
6. Support BAEC in ensuring that the PLSA is aligned with NAT, the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) and SDG 4 reporting and include items that allow Pakistan to benchmark results accurately.
7. Build BAEC's capacity for effective dissemination of results, and information products tailored to different stakeholder groups.

SCOPE OF WORK:

The BHCIP PMU seeks to engage a firm to build the capacity of BAEC in developing and implementing a robust assessment system and administer the PLSA. This TA will be tailor-made using “learning by doing” approach to build the technical capacity of BAEC while implementing one round of PLSA.

Tasks/Activities to be Completed by the consulting firm, and Related Outputs

The TORs are divided in five components, each with its specific set of tasks.

Component 1 - Review of BAEC's institutional and individual capacity to conduct provincial large-scale assessment with the review of Provincial Assessment on Student Learning (PASL) conducted by BAEC in 2022-23.

- a. Review test items developed by BAEC for discriminatory properties and cognitive levels with reference to SLOs, along with the assessment framework developed for PASL 2022.

² 1. Planning (school & student sampling, timelines, budget, staffing required, quality assurance), 2. Test Design (assessment framework – cognitive and difficulty levels, test item development in relation to grade specific SLOs, utilization of IBS, creating scoring rubric), 3. Pilot Testing (collecting feedback on items for clarity, fairness and difficulty of assessment, item performance/administration process, revise test items based on the feedback), 4. Test Administration (training of the test administrators, finalization of test booklets, test booklet distribution protocol, collection of completed test booklets), 5. Data Collection (compiling and organizing data, verifying accuracy and completeness of the data, ensuring confidentiality), 6. Reporting and Recommendations.

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- b. Assess the current organogram of BAEC for suitability to administer PLSA, including key staff positions, roles and responsibilities, technical skills, workflow, and suggest adjustments.
 - c. Assess faculty expertise in sub-specialties³ for a large-scale assessment, and
 - d. Identify individuals and sub-groups for sub-specialties for targeted capacity building; ensuring BAEC has requisite skill sets to conduct large-scale assessment aligned with NAT framework.

The firm is expected to prepare a training needs assessment report with recommendations, detailing BEAC current ability and technical expertise on all key components to conduct PLSA and how the gaps will be addressed.

Component 2 - Build capacity (a hands-on program) of BAEC staff to conduct provincial large-scale assessment.⁴

- a. Building capacity of BAEC staff with identified specialties. The activity will include, but not be limited to:
 - a. In-person practical training workshops focused on building skills and expertise in the different stages of a PLSA study: planning, test design, pilot testing, test administration, data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination.
 - b. Develop guidelines, procedures, or protocols to improve the assessment processes.
 - c. Develop PLSA framework in alignment with the National Curriculum of Pakistan and other relevant learning standards of Pakistan, and the GPF.

Component 3 - Conduct the PLSA (from planning, test design, item writing, sampling, piloting, tool development and finalization, data collection-cleaning-analysis, and report writing).

- I. Planning for implementation of PLSA together with BAEC:
 - a. Develop a detailed plan with timelines from preparation to administration of PLSA.
 - b. Develop a test design, sampling plan, test items for grade 4 and 8 in English, Urdu, Science, and Mathematics.
 - c. Pilot the test items, review, and finalize them using Item Response Theory to meet the criteria for reliability, validity and fairness including review for discriminating properties, and assessing for cognitive and difficulty level. Within the ambit of psychometric analysis, conduct classical test theory, factor analysis, reliability and validity analysis, and differential item function as required. The pilot will include at least 2 booklets x 50 test items per subject per grade.
 - d. Finalization of test items⁵ and the background questionnaire for the final administration of the PLSA. This will include:

³ Item writers and reviewers (subject specialist), translators, psychometrician, statistician, markers, question paper and document production, typesetters (graphics designer), data entry officer, data quality officer, data analyst, report writer etc.

⁴ Using the existing student learning assessment data from PASL (2023) as reference.

⁵ Consideration of cognitive and contextual instruments that are appropriate, linguistically equivalent, and psychometrically equivalent across multiple languages.

- i. Sampling for provincial PLSA
 - ii. Finalization of the test booklets, answer rubric, coding book.
 - iii. Logistical planning for PLSA
 - iv. Workshops and training of test administrators.
- II. Work with BAEC on data collection, entry, cleaning, and data analysis of PLSA.
- III. Support the management and analysis of assessment data to produce meaningful results for policymakers and other stakeholders.
 - a. Produce descriptive analyses of learning and achievement trends, including breakdowns by relevant sociodemographic groups.
- IV. Support preparation of assessment results reports, and other results dissemination strategies tailored for different stakeholder groups.

Component 4 - Ensure a functional items bank software (IBS) with the PLSA test items populated, clearly linked with appropriate student learning outcomes and with the metadata.
BAEC acquired the IBS used by the Punjab Examination Commission.

- a. Assess the IBS for its functionality and utility for PLSA and if needed, prepare a customization plan.
- b. Train BAEC staff on the utilization of IBS.
- c. Customize the IBS and populate it with the PLSA test items.
- d. Develop a guide for BEAC staff for IBS utilization.

Component 5 - Development of guides

- a. Guides for test item writing, reviewing, and approving for grades 4 and 8 in each of the four subject – English, Mathematics, Science, and Urdu - with section on discriminating properties and cognitive levels.
- b. Guide on developing assessment framework for large-scale assessment.
- c. Guide for bias-free sampling.
- d. Guide for data entry and data analysis, including statistical and psychometric.
- e. Guide for quality check.
- f. Guide on use of dual/multiple languages.
- g. Any other guide that may help BAEC faculty members.

Final Report: The consulting firm is expected to submit ‘Project Closure Report’ after the submission and approval of the component specific reports.

Deliverables and Timeline

The firm must meet the requirements of this assignment and provide the deliverables listed in the table below by the stipulated deadlines.

The firm is expected to undertake components 2-5 concurrently, working in tandem with BAEC in ‘learning by doing’ mode.

	Deliverable	Deadline (from contract signature)
1	Inception report and detailed work plan	End of the 2nd week
2	A progress update on activities conducted, after the approval of the inception report	Every 2 weeks after the submission of the inception report
3	Component 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Review of BAEC’s capacity to deliver PLSA- Training needs assessment	End of the 6th week
4	Component 2 – Capacity Building of BAEC <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Capacity Building Plan for PSLA with agreed timelines- Training Manuals /Courses- Post-training report on specific assessment skills developed for BAEC faculty members- Recommendations for continuous improvement of skills.	End of the 10 th week
5	Component 3 - Conduct PLAS. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- PLSA implementation plan with agreed timelines- Pilot test item analysis reports- Sampling framework- Finalized test items, test booklets and background questionnaire- Logistics plan- Final assessment report with detailed analysis based on student response and student background information along with the annexures (outline of the report to be agreed a priori).	Submission deadlines will be decided with the firm for each milestone during the inception phase. Final PLSA report with analysis and annexures is due on April 30, 2025, all milestones need to be met accordingly.
6	Component 4 – Function Review of IBS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Report on IBS customization completion	End of the 12 th week
7	Component 5 – Development of PLSA process and stage guides <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Submission of all guide documents- Overall introductory document for summarizing each guide document.	June 15, 2025
8	Final Project Closure Report	One month after the completion of all the deliverables

Time Commitment

The firm will work with the BAEC for a period of up to 10 months to complete the activities and outputs described above. The firm is required to provide in-country support and be present in Quetta for at least 50% of the duration of the contract, along with upfront and post hoc work via email or phone to prepare the staff for and to clarify any remaining issues or tasks after the visit. A mix of international and local consultants and expertise is desirable.

Institutional Arrangements

The representatives of the firm will work closely with BAEC, in a “learning by doing” capacity. By the end of the consultancy, key BAEC staff should demonstrate improved capacity to conduct the assessment-related activities that were the focus of this consultancy. The firm will report to the School Education Department of Balochistan.

Qualification Criteria

The firm should have:

- Registered in same business for past 10 years
- Demonstrated experience with at least two similar assignments that involved development, implementation, analysis, and/or reporting of large-scale assessments of student achievement
- Expertise in test item development, test booklet development, data collection, psychometric analysis, research, and report writing.
- Subject-matter expertise in Math, Science, English, and Urdu for grades 4 and 8.
- Documented and demonstrated understanding of current professional standards and best practices in the areas of educational testing and large-scale assessment.
- Demonstrated successful experience in working with government officials, assessment teams, and other key stakeholders and effectively imparting key knowledge, skills, and other capacity development in the area of large-scale assessment
- Familiarity with Pakistan’s education system, GPF, and SGD 4 reporting or equivalent
- Fluency in and ability to conduct technical assistance in English and Urdu
- Should have adequate logistical capacity
- Should have key staff with expertise and qualification mentioned in the ToRs

Key Staff

Project coordinator, (ii) a Lead Psychometrician, (iii), Education specialists in Math, Science, English, and Urdu, (iv) expert in IBS. They will have experience, qualifications, and recent similar work as per the requirements of the TORs above.

1. Project coordinator must have a master’s degree with minimum 10 years of experience in leading and managing a large-scale assessment internationally, experience in South Asian region preferred.
2. Lead psychometrician should have minimum 10 years of experience as a lead psychometrician on internationally conducted large-scale assessments.
3. Education subject experts must have master’s degree with a minimum 10 years of teaching experience in respective subject speciality along with a minimum 7 years of

experience of developing test item, capacity building and in conducting large scale assessment internationally.

4. IBS expert should have expertise in the development of IBS aligned with all the stages of a large-scale assessment.

Procurement Method

Selection will be made in accordance with the Consultant Qualification based Selection (CQS) method set out in the World Bank's Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services" (July 2016) revised November 2017 and August 2018 (Procurement Regulations) and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

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Expression of Interest (EOI) must be delivered to Procurement Section before 11.30 am 05th August, 2024 at the address below.

e-file to be submitted on: ps.bhcup@gmail.com

Any queries can be sent to: ps.bhcup@gmail.com

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