

Terms of Reference

Seenaryo Playkit Researcher | Based in Lebanon or Jordan

October 2023 - October 2024

Organization: SEENARYO with UCL's (University College London) Institute of Education

Project: Seenaryo Playkit: Transforming early years education through arts and play-based learning for children in under-served communities in Lebanon and Jordan

Project Location: Lebanon, Jordan

Consultancy Duration: Between 30 and 40 days between October 2023 and October 2024

Project fee: Between £4500 and £8800 depending on the profile of the candidate and agreed project deliverables

1. Introduction

Seenaryo is collaborating with the UCL IOE (Institute of Education) team to share learnings to maximise the impact of the Seenaryo Playkit: a teacher training app to support children's learning by allowing teachers to deliver their curriculum through play. The Playkit comprises web-based educational resources and training materials to support arts and play-based learning for children 3-8 years old, delivered alongside a three-day in-person interactive teacher training programme. Developed in 2016, the Playkit has reached over 2,600 teachers and 70,000 children in 364 schools in Lebanon and Jordan.

Seenaryo and the IOE are looking for a researcher based in Lebanon or Jordan to be a core part of the project team in this project evaluating, reviewing and sharing learning about the Seenaryo Playkit.

2. Description of the Seenaryo Playkit

Lebanon and Jordan have the highest per capita refugee populations in the world. Overlapping crises in both countries (refugee influxes, economic collapse, political instability, fallout from Covid-19) have left their education systems overstretched, underfunded and at breaking point. Both the Lebanese and Jordanian governments identify their biggest problem as the 'under qualified and unskilled teaching force' (RACE II). This worsens at early years level, where teaching is often seen as unskilled childcare. This is despite the fact that under 5s are at their most vulnerable, while having the capacity to become 'resilient for life' (Harvard Centre on the Developing Child).

The Seenaryo Playkit phone app and training programme aims to intervene by introducing participatory, child-centred pedagogies to teachers in order to get 3-8-year-old children up from their desks and engaged in their learning. The Playkit app contains hundreds of games, songs and stories, all searchable by curriculum topic. The app hosts how-to videos, music tracks, printable flashcards and simple instructions - and all content is in Arabic and English. The Playkit is usually delivered with a 3-day, in-person training.

The Playkit has been introduced and used in all governorates of Lebanon and most regions of Jordan, with a mix of refugee and host community children, including with teachers in government schools, private schools, NGO-led schools and informal education centres, over the past seven years.

The objectives of the Seenaryo Playkit are to enable:

Educators to:

1. implement child-centred, play-based teaching practices
2. manage classrooms better
3. create more inclusive classrooms

Children to:

1. engage better in learning
2. improve core life skills (cognitive, language, physical, social, emotional)
3. improve their wellbeing

3. Purpose and Objective of Assignment

The collaboration between Seenaryo and UCL's IOE has the following aims:

1. To foster knowledge exchange and shared learnings with early years stakeholders to understand priorities, perceptions and understandings of play-based learning
2. Through participatory workshops in preschools and other learning spaces in Lebanon and Jordan, to collaboratively demonstrate the adaptability of the Playkit across different early years settings and cultures, and develop resources to support its expanded use
3. Refine and further develop an evaluation design to assess the impact of the Playkit

The planned activities are:

1. Conduct field research, needs analysis and stakeholder meetings (including two-way 'learning conversations' with teachers, children, parents) to assess practices
2. Conduct a scoping literature review of best practice using play-based apps to support early learning and demonstrate innovations of the Playkit in relation to best practice, in order to inform the evaluation tools and theory of change
3. Conduct a mapping analysis including reviewing Seenaryo's existing MEAL data and making recommendations for what further data needs to be collected
4. Conduct participatory workshops with children to elicit their perceptions and experiences of play-based learning
5. Capture teachers' experiences of the Playkit
6. Compile knowledge gained to inform policy, practice and a theory of change in order to inform the co-design of a participatory evaluation for children
7. Contribute to an inception, mid-way and final report for the project
8. Develop a proposal for a larger scale evaluation/ proof of concept research and innovation project

4. Person specification

We are looking for a researcher based in Lebanon or Jordan to conduct field research with schools and other stakeholders in the region (including a limited number of school and stakeholder visits); provide insight into local education systems; produce research and recommendations; and train staff and enumerators in-country where necessary. 1-2 short trips to the other country (Jordan or Lebanon) may be necessary and would be funded as part of the project.

The researcher could work remotely or in Seenaryo's Beirut or Amman offices, as they prefer but will be expected to be available for field visits to local schools in each country throughout the project. They will work closely both with the Seenaryo and IOE teams and will be required to participate in regular Zoom calls with the Seenaryo and IOE teams based in London, Beirut and Amman.

All deliverables for this project are expected by October 2024 with a more detailed schedule and milestones to follow. If this project is successful, Seenaryo and IOE are hoping to engage in a longer collaboration over the next five years which they would hope for the researcher to be part of. An ability to be self-starting and to work independently, and an ability to collaborate and communicate effectively with others is essential.

Note: Intellectual property (IP)

The researcher will have an opportunity to co-author project outputs and academic articles, however the IP for all content produced by the consultant in collaboration with Seenaryo and the IOE researchers will belong to Seenaryo and the IOE.

5. About Seenaryo

Having reached over 100,000 children, youth, women and teachers since 2015, Seenaryo believes in the power of theatre and play to equip people with the tools to collaborate, think critically and build transferable skills - supporting them to be powerful agents of their own lives and positive contributors to their societies. While making theatre, Seenaryo is continuously training up facilitators, trainees and youth leaders to lead the work themselves, with the aim of enhancing our participants' employability and opening up income-earning opportunities.

6. Candidate Qualifications and Experience

We are looking for one consultant to carry out the assignment outlined above. The consultant should have the following qualifications and skills:

- Masters or Doctoral qualification in early childhood education or in an education and international development related field.
- Demonstrated solid and diversified experience in early childhood education research.
- Demonstrated experience of early childhood practice and working with young children.
- Willing to travel to Jordan or Lebanon for field research.
- Willing to work over an extended mandate.
- Excellent report writing and presentation skills in English and Arabic.
- Experience working on other projects in Jordan, Lebanon or the MENA region.

7. How to Apply

Interested applicants must submit an updated CV and cover letter to victoria@seenaryo.org along with a financial proposal for 12 months based on the scope of work detailed above by the **29th of September 2023**. The cover letter should specify a daily rate within the range of \$180-\$280 per day, depending on levels of experience.