

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

SOUTH SUDAN TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Development of the South Sudan National Qualifications Framework

1. Introduction

South Sudan is at a pivotal moment in its nationbuilding and education reform process. On 20 March 2025, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) convened a highlevel National Consultation Meeting in Juba, marking a significant milestone toward implementing the IGAD Qualifications Framework (IGADQF) and advancing the establishment of South Sudan's first National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The consultation brought together government ministries, education and labour institutions, UN agencies, development partners, academia, the private sector, and representatives of women, youth, refugees, and returnees. Together, these stakeholders reaffirmed the urgency of developing a coherent and credible national system for qualifications, learning pathways, and skills recognition.

The IGADQF, adopted in May 2024 in Entebbe, serves as a flagship regional instrument under the Djibouti Declaration, aimed at harmonizing qualifications across IGAD Member States. By aligning national systems with this regional framework, member states can promote labour mobility, strengthen quality assurance, advance regional integration, and facilitate mutual recognition of skills.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR, working closely with government authorities in South Sudan and IGAD, seeks to recruit a highly qualified international consultant to lead the design, development, and national validation of the South Sudan National Qualifications Framework (SSNQF). The framework aims to enhance transparency, comparability, employability, and lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals, including refugees and host communities.

2. Background

South Sudan has initiated several foundational reforms in preparation for the development of a National Qualifications Framework. These include the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework Steering Committee, efforts to strengthen quality assurance processes across education sectors, improving institutional capacity for curriculum development and accreditation, and expanding student support services and opportunities for skills development and lifelong learning.

These reform efforts, however, take place within a complex humanitarian and development context. South Sudan currently hosts more than 618,947 refugees and asylum seekers, alongside approximately 1,195,858 returnees and 1,992,513 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Many

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among these populations, especially youth, have acquired valuable skills and knowledge through nonformal, informal, and communitybased learning both within South Sudan and in displacement. Yet, in the absence of a national system for recognizing prior learning, these individuals face significant barriers to accessing further education, employment, and meaningful socioeconomic participation.

A nationally validated qualifications framework is therefore essential to ensure inclusivity, transparency, and flexibility within the education and skills ecosystem. The final SSNQF must support the recognition of diverse learning pathways, empower learners, enhance employability, facilitate mobility, and strengthen the coherence and credibility of South Sudan's broader education and training system.

2.1 Role of the Pathways to Empowerment (P2E) Project in Advancing SSNQF

The development of the SSNQF is further supported under the Pathways to Empowerment (P2E) Project for Youth in South Sudan, a sixyear national initiative funded by the Mastercard Foundation and implemented by a consortium led by War Child Canada, with UNHCR as the lead for the Policy and Enabling Environment component. The P2E project aims to expand access to quality learning and skilling opportunities for youth, strengthen national systems that support dignified and sustainable livelihoods, enhance pathways for refugees, returnees, and host community youth to transition into employment and entrepreneurship

Under this initiative, UNHCR is tasked with supporting the national SubCommittee on the SSNQF, composed of Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST), regulatory and professional bodies (Medical Council, Engineering Council, Law Society, etc.) and relevant line ministries and national stakeholders.

The recruitment of an international consultant under this ToR is a major step toward advancing South Sudan's commitments under the Djibouti Declaration, which calls for the development and adoption of harmonized, inclusive, and regionally comparable qualifications frameworks.

2.2 Strategic Importance of SSNQF for Refugees and Returnees

Central to the SSNQF is the establishment of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanisms. RPL enables individuals, especially refugees, returnees, and those without formal documentation, to have their skills formally assessed and certified. This is essential for reintegration into the national education system, access to higher education or TVET institutions, transition into labour markets and selfemployment and mobility across sectors and regions

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With the Mastercard Foundation significantly increasing its investment in the new P2E scaleup, timely progress on the SSNQF is essential to demonstrate UNHCR's leadership, deliver measurable outcomes, and strengthen national systems.

2.3 P2E Deliverables Linked to SSNQF

Under the P2E project, UNHCR by June 2026 will convene a national workshop with stakeholders and the National Steering Committee to finalize the SSNQF by July-August 2026. UNHCR will support the full development, validation, national endorsement, printing, and dissemination of the SSNQF.

The collaboration between UNHCR, IGAD, the Government of South Sudan, Mastercard Foundation, and consortium partners ensures a robust foundation for the development of a credible, regionally aligned national qualifications system.

3. Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this consultancy is to develop a comprehensive, inclusive, and nationally owned South Sudan National Qualifications Framework (SSNQF) that:

- Design a fully articulated SSNQF, including qualification levels, descriptors, competencies, and progression pathways.
- Harmonize education subsectors by aligning general education, TVET, higher education, and professional training into a coherent national structure.
- Develop Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanisms, including assessment approaches, institutional roles, and quality assurance processes. Ensure compatibility with the IGADQF, European Qualification Framework (EQF), and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).
- Develop a costed and actionable implementation roadmap, including phased rollout, institutional responsibilities, financing options, and monitoring framework.
- Strengthen national ownership through consultations, national workshops, and capacity development activities.

The consultant will work closely with UNHCR, Government stakeholders, IGAD, and P2E partners to produce a framework that enhances transparency, quality, and relevance across South Sudan's education and training system.

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4. Objectives

- Develop a complete SSNQF with clear level descriptors, competencies and learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competencies).
- Harmonize general education, TVET, higher education, and professional systems. Design robust RPL mechanisms tailored to South Sudan's context.
- Ensure alignment with IGADQF, EAHEQF, ACQF, ECQF, and other regional/global frameworks.
- Develop an implementation roadmap with costings, timelines, roles, and M&E structures.
- Facilitate national stakeholder engagement, validation workshop, and capacity-building.
- Strengthening alignment between qualifications and labour market needs to enhance employability and economic inclusion.
- Develop SSNQF policy and legal framework

5. Scope of Work and Key Responsibility

5.1 Inception Phase

- Conduct inception meetings with UNHCR, Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology (MoHEST), regulatory bodies (medical council, Engineering council, law society/Bar Association etc.) and other relevant line ministries in the development of the South Sudan National Qualification Framework in line with the IGAD Qualifications framework.
- Develop a comprehensive methodology, outlining data collection tools, analytical frameworks, validation processes, and risk mitigation measures.
- Submit an Inception Report that aligns workstreams, timelines, deliverables, and quality assurance mechanisms.

5.2 Situational Analysis

- Review existing educational framework, national education policies, labour policies, TVET frameworks, higher education guidelines, and quality assurance systems.
- Map current qualifications, institutional mandates, assessment systems, accreditation processes, and certification practices.

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- Identify gaps, overlaps, fragmentation, and systemic constraints affecting quality, alignment, relevance, and transparency of qualifications.
- Produce a diagnostic analysis that will serve as the technical foundation for SSNQF design.
- Review and propose alignment with existing accreditation and quality assurance systems.

5.3 Stakeholder Consultations

Engage broad and inclusive groups to ensure the SSNQF reflects national realities:

- Ministries of General Education and Instruction, universities, TVET institutions, Higher Education, Labour, and related sectors.
- Engage the national steering committee through consultative meeting regarding the development of the qualification framework for South Sudan. The consultations will gather insights into labour market demands, learner needs, institutional readiness, and implementation challenges.

5.4 Design of the SSNQF

- Define clear qualification levels with descriptors covering knowledge, skills, autonomy, responsibility, and competencies.
- Define institutional roles and responsibilities for long-term management of the SSNQF (e.g. lead ministry, coordination body, regulatory oversight).
- Develop progression pathways to ensure vertical and horizontal learner mobility.
- Incorporate Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies, assessment tools, and institutional roles.
- Propose governance structures, quality assurance models, and institutional mandates for implementation.
- Ensure the framework strengthens employability, inclusivity, and lifelong learning.
- The consultant shall analyze the South Sudan education, training, and employment context and propose a definitive Qualification Framework level structure. The proposed number of levels shall be justified through benchmarking, stakeholder consultations, and assessment of national needs, ensuring clear progression pathways and alignment with regional and international practice

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5.5 Benchmarking and Alignment

- Align the SSNQF with the IGADQF, ensuring comparability and regional recognition.
- Draw on international examples (ACQF, EQF, AQF, etc.) to ensure global relevance.
- Identify opportunities to harmonize qualifications for cross-border mobility and credential recognition.
- Development of an SSNQF Referencing and Alignment Report demonstrating correspondence between SSNQF levels and IGADQF (IGAD qualification framework), East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education EA QFHE and ACQF African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

5.6 Validation

- Design and deliver one or more national validation workshops, bringing together representatives from all key subsectors.
- Integrate feedback into the revised SSNQF to ensure accuracy, feasibility, and support national validation and prepare the framework for government endorsement.

5.7 Finalization and Implementation Plan

- Produce a comprehensive SSNQF document with technical annexes.
- Develop a practical, costed implementation roadmap including governance and coordination roles, financing and resource mobilization strategy, capacity-building needs and timelines and monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEL) framework
- Provide report and recommendations for phased roll-out and sustainability.

5.8 Sensitization and Capacity Building

- Develop user-friendly training modules, guide notes, and communication materials.
- Facilitate sensitization and orientation workshops at national and sub-national levels.
- Build the capacity of government officials, educators, assessors, and other stakeholders to operationalize the SSNQF.

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6. Deliverables

Deliverable	Timeline
Inception	4 weeks
Situational analysis	4 weeks
Draft SSNQF	12 weeks
Validation workshop	2 weeks
revised final SSNQF	2 weeks
Sensitization and Final Report	End of Assignment

7. Duration of Assignment

The consultancy will run for six months, with the possibility of an additional 1month no-cost extension to support high-level validation, government approval processes, capacity-building, and communication activities.

8. Methodology

The consultant is expected to employ:

- Participatory and inclusive approaches to ensure national ownership
- Mixed methods, including desk review, interviews, focus groups, and workshops
- Conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches
- The best international practices to ensure the framework is credible and comparable

9. Required Qualifications

Advanced degree in Education, TVET, Human Resources, Public Policy, or related field, minimum 10 years of progressively responsible experience in NQF development or education systems strengthening, demonstrated experience designing NQFs or regional qualifications frameworks, experience working in Africa or fragile/humanitarian contexts, strong knowledge of quality assurance, curriculum design, and labour market systems and excellent facilitation, communication, and stakeholder engagement skills.

10. Reporting and Supervision

The consultant will report directly to UNHCR and work in close coordination with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and

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Technology (MoHEST), the Ministry of Labour (MoHEST), the National Steering Committee for the SSNQF and any others deem necessary.

11. Ethical Considerations

The consultant must ensure, compliance with UNHCR protection standards and ethical guidelines, protection of sensitive and confidential data, respect for gender equity, inclusion, and cultural diversity, meaningful engagement of refugees, returnees, women, youth, and marginalized groups

12. Consultant Profile

Interested candidates must hold a Master's degree or a PhD holder with 10 years relevant experience, having reviewed in the past education framework. submit a detailed technical proposal, an updated CV and samples of similar work demonstrating expertise in NQF development.

13. Expected Impact

Once implemented, the SSNQF will enhance the quality, relevance, and comparability of education and training programs, promote access to equitable education, improve employability, workforce readiness, and labour mobility, provide credible pathways for refugees, returnees, and vulnerable learners to have their skills recognized, strengthen South Sudan's integration into regional and global education and labour systems, and contribute to national development, social cohesion, and economic resilience.

14. Submission

Please send your CV, Technical and Financial proposals detailing evaluation methodology, work plan and budget, and all relevant documents to: consultancy.southsudan@lutheranworld.org coping brenda.litunya@lutheranworld.org and andrew.masaba@lutheranworld.org not later than 7th September 2026.

