

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ECD consultant

Type of contract: *National consultancy on Early Childhood Development*

Duration: *11,5 months (extendable), office-based / teleworking*

1. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION:

Globally UNICEF's *Programme Guidance for Early Childhood Development* 2017 provides a framework for ECD and articulates how it fits within the UNICEF Strategic Plan and is foundational for achieving the SDGs. SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health), SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 16 (peace and justice) will not be achieved unless requisite attention and investments are made in young children and their families. The UNICEF Strategic Plan aligns fully with the SDGs, so UNICEF must deliver on the ECD agenda if it is to achieve results; as such, ECD contributes to all five Strategic Plan Goal Areas.

Regionally, UNICEF's ECD agenda for Europe and Central Asia Region, aims at overcoming regional challenges to early childhood development (ECD) that include the loss of human, social and economic capital to societies resulting from a lack of political and financial investment in the early years of life, and limited understanding of the importance of getting it right for children from the outset. The results later in life can include poor physical and mental health, poor achievement, unemployment, and poverty. Given the many needs of young children, UNICEF works closely with health, nutrition, education and child protection systems in Europe and Central Asia, promoting initiatives that give every child the best possible start in life.

Nationally, UNICEF Belarus, under the 2021-2025 Country programme, continues to develop and implement programmes aiming to enhance systems and capacity of national stakeholders so that young children's development is not jeopardized.

Family policy and assistance in early childhood, both monetary and social are enough, however early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood education (ECE) services are not. In addition to that, Belarus lacks an ECD Policy and Cross-sectoral Action Plan, that may ensure the political commitment to ECD across sectors and quality of services.

According to 2018 national data, access to ECE stood at 0-3 years old 44,6%, 3-6 years old 96,5% in Belarus, with the quality of the existing provisions being an ongoing challenge. National averages showed inequities, such as lack of access to ECE for young children (3-4); young children from low-income families (80%) and rural areas (84,8%); and from low mother education (66%) and those having functional difficulties (72,8) attending ECE less than other children. Children who do not attend ECE are less on track in numeracy and socio-emotional domains.

Existing early childhood development (ECD) services are frequently limited to care and health issues and not development. The analysis of KAP data shows that breastfeeding was common after delivery, but only 31%³ of parents reported that their child was exclusively breastfed up to age 5 months. Higher rates of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life were associated with higher levels of parental education and residing in an urban area. Continued breastfeeding up to the recommended age of 2 years and beyond was rare. Qualitative interviews indicated that a predominant reason for early discontinuation of breastfeeding was concern about faltering growth in infants, linked to widespread beliefs among parents that mothers did not produce enough milk.

Existing services for young children fail to provide families, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable with comprehensive responses that consider all the children's development needs. Establishment of a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary ECD approach across mainstream services for young children is essential to inform policy, structural and institutional changes.

2. PURPOSE/ OBJECTIVE:

Under direct supervision of the UNICEF ECD Specialist and in close collaboration with other relevant programme section chiefs, the consultant will support UNICEF Country Office in the following:

A. Technical expertise improving young children's Health and Nutrition within the following categories:

1. Promotion of breastfeeding practices across health system levels and scale up of the Baby Friendly Hospital network:
 - Support MoH in scaling up the BFH initiative, including establishment of working group and assessment of BFHs;
 - Support M&E section in finalization of the baseline and secondary analyses on breastfeeding (BF);
 - Support the finalization and plan the dissemination of BF informational, educational and methodological materials for parents and specialists.
2. Strengthen system of inclusive nutrition and responsive feeding for children with special developmental needs and disabilities:
 - Support finalization of the UNICEF TOC on Nutrition;
 - Support in improving capacity of caregivers in responsive feeding across sectors (ECI service; palliative care; medical rehabilitation services; baby homes and other residential institutions services);
 - Support integration of inclusive nutrition/ responsive feeding into parenting counseling across all sectors of health system, including "Count me In" application.
3. Strengthen National ECI system:
 - Support development of normative package for universal development monitoring tools and screening use, including tools for ASDs
 - Support the review and update of ECI standards and monitoring system, including possible synchronization with admin and statistical data collection processes;
 - Support MoH in development of a normative package for E-ECI;
 - Support establishing a system of in-service training, both formal and out curricular, for ECI specialists to deliver services online;
 - Establish a system of supervision of quality provision of ECI services;
 - Support scaling up the ECI services on the basis of baby homes;
 - Support M&E Specialist in conducting ECI costing study.

B. Coordination with national partners and advocacy support in scaling up cross-sectoral approaches for ECD:

Advocacy for ECD

- Support the establishment of national working group on ECD Strategy development;
- Support activities aimed at raising awareness on ECD with key stakeholders;
- Support strengthening capacity of national and local decision makers in science of ECD and Nurturing care framework;
- Support ECD and Communication sections in drafting C4D concept note on ECD;

- Support ECD and Communication section in development of ECD repository of resources, both national and UNICEF developed.

Overall office support from ECD section:

- Support in preparing programme and donor reports, and other reporting requirements in the office;
- Contribute to UNICEF inputs for development of State National programmes and strategic documents and UNICEF's annual work plans with profile ministries;
- Contribute to development of project proposals on thematic issues;
- Participate in regional and global relevant meetings and webinars, including network meetings.

3. DELIVERABLES - TIMELINE:

The work will be reported through monthly progress reports, with tasks agreed ahead of time with the supervisor. Pending the requirements of the programme section, the consultant will be asked to contribute to the programme strategies and implementation which will result in deliverables such as:

- Providing technical expertise to support country office's programmes and projects on ECD, ECI and inclusive nutrition.
- Drafting of concept papers and work plans, TORs, proposals etc.
- Technical support during reviewing and drafting analytical reports from surveys and studies, written contribution into qualitative and quantitative analysis of available data and evidence within mentioned programmatic areas.
- Technical support to implementing national partners, governmental and non-governmental partners in design, implementation, reporting and monitoring interventions in ECD, ECI and inclusive nutrition.
- Technical contributions to reporting (e.g. donor reports, annual reports, project reports, travel reports, internal meeting etc.) within mentioned programmatic areas.
- Participation and support in facilitation of workshops, training sessions, study tours and other key meetings within the ECD programme.
- Other deliverables as required.

4. SUPERVISION, WORK RELATIONS & OVERSIGHT

The work of the consultant will be supervised by UNICEF ECD Specialist or in case of her absence by Deputy Representative. Consultant is expected to work in close collaboration with all members of ECD/Disability section. The consultant will be working closely with other UNICEF CO sections as required.

5. TRAVEL

"If UNICEF determines that the Contractor needs to travel to perform his or her assignment, that travel shall be specified in the contract and the Contractor's travel costs shall be set out in the contract: In cases where travel costs have not been set out in the individual contract, the consultant and individual contractors are expected to submit, within ten days of completion of a specific travel, a voucher for reimbursement of travel expenses to the Operations section. Reimbursements shall only be processed if travel was duly authorized in the individual contract or by an authorized manager of the contracting section, in writing and prior to the travel. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for assuming costs for obtaining visas and travel insurance."

6. TIMEFRAME

The consultancy is for a period of 11.5 months with possibility of extension depending on the needs and affordability of UNICEF Belarus office.

7. LOCATION

The consultancy is office-based and full time. The is expected to work at the UNICEF CO premises during the regular working hours (9:00 – 18:00, lunch time 13:00 -14:00) or providing tele-working during COVID-19

period, or a hybrid of in office and teleworking. The modality of work is fully upon decision of the UNICEF CO management.

8. PAYMENT CONDITIONS:

Payments will be carried out monthly in US Dollars through a bank transfer to the consultant's account upon provision of invoices and based on satisfactory and timely completion of the deliverables. The consultant will be expected to provide an invoice for the actual number of days completed in the reporting month and payment will be pro-rated based on these days.

The consultant will receive Paid Time Off (PTO) credit at the rate of one- and one-half days (1.5 days) for each full month of service, to be credited on the last calendar day of the month, and up to 17 days for a maximum of 11.5 months contract.

Days worked per Month	PTO accrued
1-7	0.5 day
8-14	0.5 day
15-22	0.5 day

UNICEF does not provide or arrange health insurance coverage for consultants.

Certified Sick Leave (CSL) is applicable. CSL can be a maximum duration of 20 calendar days within any 11.5 months period, provided a medical certificate duly signed and stamped by medical authority. CSL shall be prorated and adjusted to the duration of the contract accordingly (if it is less than 11.5 months)*. ***Subject to change**

The consultant has no entitlement for maternity, adoption or paternity leave or any other kinds of special leave.

UNICEF will not undertake any liability for tax, duty or other contribution payable by the consultant on payments made under this contract.

9. UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE:

Payments to the consultant under this contract, including each installment or periodic payment (if any), is subject to the consultant's 's full and complete performance of his or her obligations under this contract with regard to such payment to UNICEF's satisfaction, and UNICEF's certification to that effect.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines. All materials developed will remain the copyright of UNICEF and that UNICEF will be free to adapt and modify them in the future. This ToR is an integral part of the contract (SSA) signed with the consultant.

10. QUALIFICATIONS OR SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE/ EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Education:

University degree in pediatrics and/or psychology is required

Experience:

- At least 7 years of professional experience in young/ early child development in health sector, pediatrics, early rehabilitation/abilitation, infant and young child health and nutrition. Experience with focus on children with developmental delays and disabilities is advantage
- Strong knowledge of the national legislation relevant to rights of young children and their families, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other international standards related to ECD
- Experience of facilitation of the national dialogue on formulating a multidisciplinary vision of ECD
- Strong analytical, negotiating, communication and advocacy skills
- Experience in cooperation and interaction with government bodies, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations
- Experience in partnership with international organizations: EU, UN and other
- Demonstrated ability to work in a multi-cultural environment, and establish harmonious and effective working relationships both within and outside the organization
- Experience in project management is desirable

Language Requirements:

- Knowledge of written and spoken English is advantage
- Fluency in Russian is required
- Fluency in Belarusian is desirable

Functional competencies:

- Strong management, coordination, and facilitation skills
- Ability to work in team and meet deadlines
- Ability to collect, analyze and systematize received information
- Good report writing skills
- Strong communication skills (oral and written)
- Results oriented, flexible, and problem-solving skills
- Ability to cope with pressure and setbacks
- Excellent computer skills

11. PROCESS FOR APPLICATION

The interested contractor should submit by March 14, 2022 18.00 the following documentation:

- 1) Technical proposal (CV)
- 2) Financial proposal (with the indication of daily and monthly rates)
- 3) Work experience.

Criteria for the selection:

- 1) Relevant experience
- 2) Availability to perform the ToR requirements and meet deadlines

All applications will be treated with strict confidentiality. UNICEF is an equal opportunity employer