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TERMS OF REFERENCE

International Consultant – Strategic Assessment of the Action for Adolescent Development (A4AD) Programme

CONTRACT MODALITY:	**Individual Consultancy (International)**
DUTY STATION:	**Education, Monrovia, Liberia**
DURATION OF CONTRACT:	**2.5 months (remote)**

Background and Rationale

Adolescents make up a large share of Liberia's population and are critical to the country's future development. Although access to education has improved, many adolescents continue to face challenges in progressing through and completing school. Dropout, repetition, over-age enrolment, and poor learning outcomes remain common, particularly among girls, children with disabilities, rural adolescents, and other vulnerable groups. Poverty, early pregnancy, harmful gender norms, child labour, and limited access to inclusive education and skills training continue to restrict opportunities for many adolescents. Those who are out of school often have little access to second-chance education, vocational training, or support services. UNICEF's Situation Analysis highlights persistent inequalities affecting rural and marginalized adolescents.

The Government of Liberia's Education Sector Plan (2022/23-2026/27) prioritizes inclusion, gender equality, secondchance education, and TVET. However, gaps remain in identifying and supporting the most vulnerable adolescents, particularly those out of school. Strengthening education data systems and targeted programming is therefore essential. UNICEF's new Country Programme places increased emphasis on improving access to education, skills development, and protective services for vulnerable adolescents, especially girls.

The Action for Adolescent Development (A4AD) programme was established to address barriers to education, skills development, protection, and social inclusion among adolescents and young people in Liberia. Under the current UNICEF Country Programme, A4AD has shifted from a broader youth-focused approach to a more targeted focus on vulnerable adolescents aged 10-18, particularly girls. Programme reviews indicate that implementation has increasingly concentrated on older youth and employability initiatives, creating a need for clearer targeting and stronger pathways for younger adolescents who face heightened risks of school dropout, exclusion, and other vulnerabilities.

Rationale for the Strategic Assessment

To ensure the A4AD programme is fit for purpose under the new CPD in which adolescent girls' development is a flagship programme. This strategic assessment is required to bridge the gap between policy intent and field-level implementation. It also responds to the need to revise and restructure the programme to make it more efficient, sustainable, and impact driven. The assessment will:

- Assess Alignment: Determine the extent to which the current programme objectives and activities are effectively aligned with the primary focus of adolescent girls..
- Analyse Programmatic Inequities: Examine why specific groups (teen mothers, children with disabilities) remain underserved and how current targeting mechanisms can be refined.
- Address Evidence Gaps: Utilize existing administrative data, previous studies, and monitoring reports to synthesize what is known and identify where the programme lacks sufficient evidence to measure impact.

• Inform Programme Restructuring: Provide evidence-based recommendations to improve efficiency, enhance sustainability, and ensure that programme management/implementation arrangements and interventions are more strategically designed to achieve measurable impact.
• Define Strategic Focus: Provide actionable recommendations to clarify the age-specific interventions, ensuring the programme effectively differentiates between the needs of younger adolescents and older youth.

This assessment serves as a strategic instrument to refine and reposition the A4AD's operational framework, ensuring that available but limited resources are used more efficiently and equitably, with a stronger focus on sustainable outcomes and measurable impact. Ultimately it aligns the programme with the national commitment to leave no one behind.

This strategic assessment will be delivered by the national consultant based in Liberia along with Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) staff, through field-based data collection and stakeholder engagement. Throughout the process, the national consultant would coordinate with an internationally-recruited consultant who will provide technical quality assurance and comparative international expertise.

Purpose and Objectives of the Assignment

The purpose of this strategic assessment is to generate evidence and strategic recommendations to support the repositioning, strengthening, and long-term sustainability of the A4AD Programme within the context of UNICEF Liberia's new Country Programme 2026-2030 and its increased focus on adolescent girls and out-of-school children.

The specific objectives of the assessment are to:

• assess the strategic positioning, inclusiveness, and coherence of the A4AD Programme within the broader national context of adolescent development and OOSC programming in Liberia;

• examine the visibility, participation, and targeting of younger adolescents in comparison to older youth, including the transition from a broader youth focus toward a more targeted adolescent girls strategy, and the extent to which health, nutrition, and protection/gender-based violence (GBV) dimensions are integrated within the programme approach;

• review the alignment, consistency, and responsiveness of programme models, thematic skill areas, and learning approaches across implementation sites, including the balance between vocational training and employable soft skills in relation to local needs and contexts;

• examine the linkages and effective collaboration opportunities between A4AD and existing programmes, including the Let Us Learn programme and its engagement in adolescent centres in New Kru Town and West Point.

• assess the level of coordination and collaboration between relevant government ministries and stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), in relation to curriculum development, foundational learning, ECE) integration, and systems strengthening;

• examine the feasibility and strategic implications of transitioning from the current 17-centre model toward a more focused convergence-county approach aimed at reducing duplication and strengthening coordination and sustainability;

• identify potential pathways for sustainability, institutionalization, and government ownership of UNICEF-supported centres, including concrete approaches to strengthen coordination with, and handover to, relevant government ministries and local authorities, and outline opportunities for external resource mobilization, such as identifying cofunding sources and supporting proposal development, in view of UNICEF's own limited operational resource;

review existing programme data, monitoring systems, and available evidence related to student well-being and programme performance, identify key evidence gaps, and outline considerations for future evidence generation related to OOSC and adolescents;

• provide actionable recommendations to inform future programme design, CPD implementation, strategic planning, and decision-making related to adolescent development and OOSC programming in Liberia; and

• based on findings from the strategic assessment, update and operationalize the A4AD project document, including the concept note, strategic framework, and workplan, in line with UNICEF's CPD, MoYS Strategic Plan, ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development, and other partnership engagement frameworks as well as global agenda.

Scope of Work

The strategic assessment will cover the thematic, geographic, and chronological dimensions of the A4AD Programme implemented by UNICEF Liberia and its partners.

Thematically, the strategic assessment will examine programme strategies and interventions related to adolescent development, OOSC, skills development, vocational and life skills training, adolescent girls' programming, foundational learning, inclusion, protection and GBV considerations, inter-sectoral linkages, systems strengthening, sustainability, and government ownership, with strong focus on adolescent girls. The assessment will also review programme coordination mechanisms, partnership arrangements, and existing monitoring and data systems, while also taking into consideration relevant programme evolution, strategic shifts, reviews, and contextual developments that inform the repositioning of the programme under the new CPD priorities.

Geographically, the assessment will draw on a purposive sample of A4AD implementation sites, selected to reflect variation in centre type, geographic region, and service maturity, rather than covering all 17 centres (including the two adolescent centres in West Point & New Kru Town) in full. The final sample size and site selection will be confirmed during the inception phase, in consultation with MoYS and UNICEF, and will be determined based on the assessment timeline and resource envelope agreed under this contract.

For the purposes of this assignment, the international consultant's contribution is scoped as remote, desk-based quality assurance and technical advisory input, such as reviewing tools, data, and drafts produced by the national consultant; providing written and verbal technical feedback; and contributing directly to the strategic sections of the final report, concept note, and workplan. All field coverage and site visits described above will be undertaken by the national consultant.

Methodology

The assessment is expected to adopt a mixed-methods and participatory approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The methodology should be designed to support a strategic and operational assessment of the A4AD Programme and generate actionable recommendations to inform programme repositioning, CPD implementation, and future programming for adolescents and OOSC.

The consultant will be expected to review and make effective use of existing programme documentation, monitoring data, administrative records, previous reviews, studies, and other available evidence to minimize duplication and strengthen the evidence base of the assessment.

Under this assignment, the international consultant will work with the national consultant to develop the methodology and data collection tools during the inception phase, quality-assure its technical soundness, and remotely review and validate data as it is collected and analysed. The national consultant will conduct field-based data collection, direct engagement with respondents, and site visits along with trained MoYS enumerators.

The methodology should include, but not necessarily be limited to:

• comprehensive desk review of relevant programme documents, policies, strategies, reports, monitoring data, and existing studies;

• analysis of existing programme and administrative data related to programme participation, adolescent profiles, service delivery models, and student well-being;

• key informant interviews with UNICEF staff, government counterparts, implementing partners, development partners, community stakeholders, and other relevant actors;

focus group discussions and participatory consultations with adolescents, adolescent girls, youth participants, caregivers, instructors, and community representatives, as appropriate;

• site visits to selected programme implementation areas and learning centres; and
triangulation of findings from multiple data sources to strengthen validity and credibility of the assessment findings.

The consultant will be expected to ensure that the methodology is gender-responsive, adolescent-sensitive, ethically sound, and inclusive of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including children with disabilities. All data collection activities should adhere to UNICEF ethical standards, safeguarding principles, confidentiality requirements, and informed consent procedures.
The detailed methodology, data collection tools, and analytical framework will be further refined and validated during the inception phase in consultation with UNICEF and key stakeholders.

Sampling Approach

The consultant will be expected to propose an appropriate sampling strategy during the inception phase, aligned with the objectives, scope, timeline, and resource envelope of the assessment. The sampling approach should ensure adequate representation of key stakeholder groups, programme implementation contexts, and geographic areas relevant to the A4AD Programme.

The assessment is expected to include a purposive and/or stratified sampling approach covering, as relevant:

• adolescents and youth participating in A4AD-supported interventions, including adolescent girls and `younger adolescents;

• OOSC and vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities and teen mothers, where feasible and appropriate;
• instructors, facilitators, and centre management personnel;

• caregivers, parents, and community representatives;

• government stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, including representatives from the MoE, MoYS, and other relevant ministries and agencies;

• implementing partners, civil society organizations, and development partners involved in programme implementation and coordination; and

• UNICEF programme and cross-sectoral staff involved in the design, implementation, monitoring, and oversight of the programme.

The consultant should also propose the selection criteria for programme sites, centres, counties, and respondents, ensuring an appropriate balance across different programme models, geographic locations, and implementation contexts. The final sample size and sampling strategy should be justified in the inception report and remain feasible within the available timeline and resources. The international consultant will review and validate the proposed sampling strategy and selection criteria remotely, drawing on comparative experience from similar assessments in other contexts, before these are finalized with MoYS and UNICEF.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
Inception Phase	Quality assurance and technical review of the 5-page inception report, including methodology and data collection tools including specific indicators for adolescent girls and age- and disability-disaggregated data, as well as data collection protocol, tools, and training/orientation materials for MoYS field enumerators.	22 September 2026
Data Collection and Stakeholder Consultations	Remote technical guidance and support in data collection and data analysis. *Data collection is conducted by the national consultant and by trained MoYS staff.	28 September 2026
Field Assessment Report	Technical assistance and guidance and quality assurance review of a 10-page report on the evaluation of A4AD centres.	6 October 2026
Draft Strategic Analysis	Technical review of the draft assessment report (5 pages), with international comparative input on co-funding/sustainability models.	12 October 2026
Final Strategic Assessment and Programme Package	Final Strategic Assessment Report including: • Strategic recommendations for A4AD repositioning under CPD 2026-2030 • Sustainability and resource mobilization pathways • Evidence gap analysis and monitoring recommendations • Updated A4AD Concept Note/Project Document • Revised Strategic Framework and Results Framework • Updated Theory of Change • Costed Workplan:	26 October 2026
Dissemination and Validation Workshop	Presentation of findings, recommendations, and updated programme package to MoYS, MoE, and MoGCSP stakeholders	30 October 2026

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered "staff members" under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF's policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.
- The selected candidate is solely responsible for ensuring that the health insurance (and visa if applicable) required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract. Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully-vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.
- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES (CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Education:

- Advanced degree in Education, Social Sciences, Development Studies, Public Policy, International Development, Monitoring & Evaluation, or a related field. Bachelor's degree in social sciences, International Relations and Development Studies

Work Experience:

- At least 10 years of experience in education, research, monitoring and evaluation (MEL), and international development assessment, including in an international/multi-country advisory or quality-assurance capacity.
- Demonstrated experience conducting or quality-assuring assessments, evaluations, or strategic reviews using both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods.

Language requirements

- Fluency in English is required.

Knowledge/Expertise/Skills:

- Strong monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) expertise, including evidence synthesis, data quality review, and results framework/theory of change development.
- Proven experience in adolescent programming and gender-equity focused evidence generation and use, with exposure to more than one country context Strong skills in data management, monitoring, reporting, and evidence-based decision-making.
- Prior experience providing remote technical support, quality assurance, or peer review to nationally-led assessments or evaluations, ideally within UNICEF or a comparable UN/international development agency

Desirables:

- Experience with Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and out-of-school children (OOSC) studies is an asset.
- Familiarity with the Liberian education, youth, or social development sectors is an asset.