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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Team leader for the situation analysis and readiness assessment on disability inclusion in Afghanistan

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Kabul
DURATION OF CONTRACT	5 months

Purpose of Assignment

UNICEF Afghanistan is commissioning the situation analysis and readiness assessment of disability inclusion in UNICEF programming and operations in Afghanistan. This exercise will serve as a critical tool for incorporating best practices and fostering continuous learning by developing a situation analysis of children with disabilities in Afghanistan and assessing UNICEF Afghanistan's institutional readiness to systematically integrate disability inclusion across its programming and operations. By combining a situation analysis with an internal readiness assessment, UNICEF Afghanistan and partners will be better positioned to identify practical entry points for disability inclusion, strengthen program design and implementation, and ensure that interventions reach and benefit children with disabilities in a measurable and sustainable way.

Background

Afghanistan's disability landscape is shaped by decades of conflict, insecurity, and limited service access, resulting in a high prevalence of functional difficulties among its population. According to recent United Nations data, nearly one-quarter of Afghans live with mild disability, 40 per cent experience moderate disability, and around 14 per cent face severe disability, highlighting a significant segment of the population living with functional limitations. These figures underscore the urgent need for inclusive development and service delivery, particularly as persons with disabilities often encounter substantial barriers to education, healthcare, employment, and social participation in Afghanistan's challenging socio-economic environment.

Despite Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and national policy commitments to promote inclusion, implementation gaps persist, and reliable, disaggregated disability data remain limited, constraining evidence-based policymaking and programming. The combination of high disability prevalence and persistent barriers underscores the importance of strengthening disability-inclusive planning, monitoring, and service provision to ensure that children with disabilities are meaningfully included in national development and humanitarian responses.

According to UNICEF Afghanistan MICS 2022-2023 data, 29.8 per cent of children aged 3-17 years have some type of functional difficulty. According to evidence, challenges in analysis and design of programmes for people and children with disabilities limited their access to services and equitable outcomes. A lack of specific indicators to track progress for people and children with disabilities hampers the ability to measure and prioritize their needs effectively.

This assessment is needed because children with disabilities in Afghanistan face heightened and often invisible barriers to accessing essential services, including health, nutrition, education, child protection, and social protection, particularly in a context of increasing poverty, displacement, and restrictions on participation. At the same time, disability data and systematic analysis remain limited, constraining evidence-based planning, equitable targeting, and accountability to Leave No One Behind commitments. By combining a situation analysis with an

internal readiness assessment, UNICEF Afghanistan and partners will be better positioned to identify practical entry points for disability inclusion, strengthen program design and implementation, and ensure that interventions reach and benefit children with disabilities in a measurable and sustainable way.

Purpose

The purpose of this evidence-generation exercise is to (i) develop a situation analysis of children with disabilities in Afghanistan and (ii) assess UNICEF Afghanistan's institutional readiness to systematically integrate disability inclusion across its programming and operations.

More specific objectives of the assessment include the following:

- Analyze the national context for children with disabilities and identify key deprivations, barriers to accessing essential services and participation, and enabling factors affecting implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), progress toward inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) processes, and practical opportunities to advance inclusion of children with disabilities.

- Assess UNICEF Afghanistan's readiness to mainstream and integrate children with disability inclusion in programming and operations with particular focus on people and culture (human resources) to deliver on UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy, including leadership and governance, accountability mechanisms, resource allocation, staff capacities, and integration of disability inclusion across the programme cycle.

- Develop actionable recommendations for the UNICEF Afghanistan and development/humanitarian partners to support transformative and sustainable improvements in the lives of children with disabilities.

- Propose a collaboration framework to strengthen engagement with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and relevant civil society organizations (CSOs), including to support future disability programme development and implementation.

Scope of Work

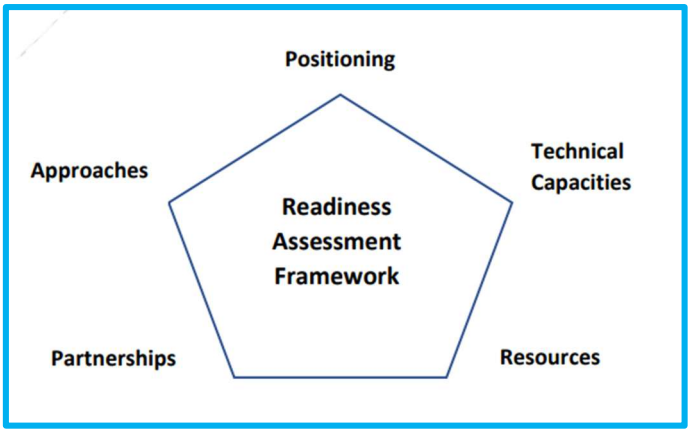
Evaluation Approach, Methodology, and Ethical Considerations

Employing a **mixed methods approach**, the assessment will collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, enhancing convergence and validity through triangulation. Moreover, the assessment is designed to be **utilization-focused**, aiming to inform key decisions and leverage evidence for ongoing programme and organizational enhancements. A **participatory approach** will be adopted, closely engaging key stakeholders to foster meaningful participation and ownership throughout the assessment process and its outputs. The assessment will systematically integrate **gender, human rights, disability, leave no one behind principle, and equity considerations** across all stages, encompassing key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and the survey. Special attention will be given to ensuring the **accessibility of data collection tools**.

The situation analysis will adopt the analytical framework[1], including theory of change, developed by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD). **The readiness assessment approach** will follow five-dimensional framework, including positioning, approaches, technical capacities, resources, and partnerships.

[1] The analytical framework is built on a human rights-based understanding of change processes, where empowerment and collective action of rights holders (persons with disabilities and their families) are key pre-conditions along with sufficient capacity and authority (human, systemic and financial) of duty bearers to fulfil their obligations as outlined in national legislation and international conventions.

Figure 1: Readiness assessment approach[2]



Positioning: Learning about UNICEF's positioning and comparative advantage to speak and work on disability issues within a country is an important element of organizational readiness. This dimension will help examine how is UNICEF positioned in a country with regard to disability and what factors support or challenge its positioning vis-a-vis key public-sector authorities, the private sector, UN and development/humanitarian partners and other key stakeholders. How UNICEF regards and perceives itself for being an important player will also be assessed. Furthermore, this dimension will also look at UNICEF's internal positioning, in particular senior management role, sectors, and commitment toward disability issues.

Approaches: Under this dimension, information on the current situation of UNICEF's work related to disability, including internal organizational arrangements and support, will be collected. It will also aim to collect information on various approaches such as data and evidence generation; advocacy and communication; and policy or strategy development used for disability work. Also, it would include information on disability inclusion and integration in humanitarian/development work and sectoral/multisectoral programming in health, education, ECD, child protection, nutrition, WASH, social protection, SBC, and other sectors. Key areas will look into (a) early identification and interventions, (b) inclusive education, (c) family care, (d) social protection, (e) cross-sectoral - moving from disempowerment to empowerment. It will help see what kind of programming approaches are already in use and help determine gaps, challenges, as well as needs and aspirations to enhance impact. It will also examine the role of institutional arrangement vis-à-vis disability inclusion in programming and operations.

Technical capacities: This dimension will aim to collect information on current technical as well as human capacities wherever they exist and also to gauge gaps and needs for those still missing pertaining to knowledge, skills and technical capacities to help UNICEF staff undertake better programming for disability inclusion and to advise, advocate and engage with relevant stakeholders. Any other capacities that are needed for enhancing impact and how those could be delivered will also be explored under this dimension.

Partnerships: This dimension will determine how strong and influential partners UNICEF has to support both programing and advocacy on disability, it would assess who UNICEF is coordinating with among relevant de facto ministries, UN agencies, multilateral institutions, civil society actors, OPDs, children's and young people's organizations, academic institutions, and private sector. Also, it would see if UNICEF is part of any network or alliances on disability in the country and also determine as to what else needs to be done to enhance impact through partnerships.

Resources: This dimension will focus on gauging the likelihood of what financial and non-financial resources are available or required to continue and strengthen the work on disability. If available, quantifying current financial and staff investment in this agenda will help establish a baseline for the level of UNICEF corporate investment/effort in addressing the subject matter. It will also assess if any efforts are underway in the office

[2] For more details, please refer to UNICEF. (2020). Readiness Assessment Climate and Environment. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/detail/17144/readiness-assessment-climate-and-environment

or further required to mobilize additional resources, both financial and non-financial, through donors or the private sector.

At a minimum, the following **data gathering methods** are recommended:

- **Desk and literature review:** Conduct a systematic desk review encompassing key documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, programme materials, project proposals and reports, and the like.
- **Surveys:** Undertake surveys involving people and children with disabilities, as well as staff of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- **Administrative and secondary data:** Utilize administrative and secondary data judiciously, such as HMIS and DHIS 2 databases, UNICEF databases, including MICS, secondary administrative data, third-party monitoring (TPM) data, health facility administrative data, data from other programmes, etc. to optimize efficiency in the assessment process.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Conduct interviews with key decision-makers, technical staff, experts, de-facto ministries, clusters, UN agencies, extenders, service provides, accountability and disability inclusion working group, etc. Engage in focus group discussions with community members and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- **Observations:** Conduct on-site visits to OPDs, health facilities, and community-based service delivery sites for first-hand observations and a contextual understanding of the operational environment.

A national data collection firm will be hired by UNICEF Afghanistan to conduct data collection (e.g., survey, observations, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews with stakeholders speaking local languages) with the team leader training the national data collection firm's trainers, overseeing the process, and providing quality assurance. The team leader will be responsible for conducting key informant interviews with stakeholders speaking English and subsequently analyzing all data collected throughout this assessment, culminating into the draft and final assessment reports. For more details, please refer to the deliverables section.

Some of the anticipated risks in the management of this evaluation, along with corresponding mitigation measures, are documented in the table below.

Table 1: Risks and mitigation measures

Risk	Risk Mitigation Measure
Challenges with availability of data and its quality	In case of data availability and quality challenges, primary data collection would be further encouraged. Utilization of various data collection tools can mitigate this challenge.
The short timeframe for the exercise	In case of challenges with the timeframe proposed, the evaluation phases could be overlapped. For instance, during the inception phase, data collection and documentation review can be commenced so as not to lose traction between the evaluation phases.
Limitations faced by female field staff to carry out primary data collection	In case of challenges, prioritization of the safety and security of female field staff is important. The evaluation team will conduct risk assessments and ensure that fieldwork locations are secure and accessible. Moreover, establishing a system for continuous monitoring and feedback to promptly address any emerging challenges faced by female field staff is critical. This can involve regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and adjustments to the data collection plan based on their experiences.

The assessment team will be expected to follow UNICEF standards on evaluation ethics and quality, UNEG

Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, and UNEG Code of Conduct, as well as with UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.[3] The process will include the following mechanisms:

- Respecting gender and human rights principles throughout the assessment process, including the protection of confidentiality, the protection of rights, the protection, dignity and welfare of people, and ensuring informed consent.
- Data validation will take place at all levels with participants' consent.
- Maximizing the degree of participation of stakeholders in the assessment itself wherever feasible and a commitment to using participatory approaches in conducting the case studies.
- Ensuring proper data disaggregation by gender, disability, equity, and human rights-relevant factors.
- Ensuring that assessment products use gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive, and human-rights language.
- Ensuring privacy protocols and compliance with all legal data management rules and considerations.
- Practicing the 'do no harm' principle during the exercise.

The assessment team will have access to critical internal data and perspectives. These must be held with the utmost confidentiality. Likewise, the willingness of internal and external stakeholders to speak to these issues critically will depend on the provision of absolute confidentiality. The selected applicant must sign the non-disclosure agreement, abide by UNICEF's security protocols, and ensure that sensitive data is protected.

Furthermore, ethical clearance must be obtained during the inception period before any data collection with human subjects begins. The ethical clearance letter should be attached in the annexure of the final report. All data collected through this assignment, reports and dissemination materials are the intellectual properties of UNICEF and shall not be used for purposes other than those approved by the registered Institutional Review Board during the ethical clearance.

Schedule and Deliverables

A timeline of around six months is envisaged for the assessment, from October 2026 to March 2027. The assessment team should allocate reasonable effort to ensure the timely submission of all the deliverables. The proposed organization of the evaluation phases is as follows:

Inception phase (six weeks): During this phase, the assessment team is expected to gain a deep understanding of the proposed documentation, assess possible information gaps, refining the scope, methods, and critical stakeholders. The main deliverable for this phase will be the inception report, presenting a detailed description of the final scope; revised methodological approach, including any data collection and analytical instruments; preliminary evidence from the initial desk review and critical informant consultations; as well as the structure of the final report and an updated timeline for deliverables. It is expected that a short meeting will be planned with the Reference Group for the presentation of the inception report plan and discussion. After the inception report has been submitted, it would take the management team two weeks to obtain the ethical review approval.

Data collection and analysis phase (eight weeks): Additional documentation and secondary and primary data will be collected using instruments previously piloted during the inception phase. The main deliverable for this phase is all data gathered is analyzed, including preliminary data, stored in a secure repository, cleaned, and processed to ensure the anonymity of key informants. A presentation with emerging findings is also expected during this phase. Meetings with the Reference Group will be scheduled.

Report drafting and dissemination phase (ten weeks): The main deliverables for this phase are the preliminary draft of the final report and the final agreed report. In addition, it is expected that the main findings, conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned will be presented to the Reference Group and other relevant stakeholders, with a stand-alone assessment Brief and PowerPoint to be delivered. Additionally, it is anticipated that the firm will submit the manuscript for the publication as a key deliverable.

[3] These references are available at the following link: https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/resources

Other interim products are:

- Minutes of key meetings with the Reference Group;
- Revised theory of change;
- Monthly progress reports;
- Presentation of preliminary findings when requested by UNICEF to correspond to key programmatic activities;
- Copy of the anonymised data collected during the evaluation; and
- Presentation materials for the meetings with the Reference Group. These may include PowerPoint summaries of work progress and conclusions to that point.

Work Assignments Overview	**Deliverables/Outputs**	**Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable**
Inception Phase The Team Leader will produce an inception report outlining the refined evaluation scope, methodology, and approach. The report will include finalized data collection tools. The Team Leader will document key discussions and technical inputs from meetings with stakeholders and the Reference Group.	• Draft and final inception report • Finalized quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments • Fieldwork training manual • Complete assessment protocol • Final assessment sample • Concrete data analysis plan • Minutes of key meetings with the Reference Group	1 November 2026
Data Collection and Analysis Phase: The Team Leader will oversee data collection and cleaning. The Team Leader will analyze data and generate preliminary findings. The Team Leader will present emerging findings for validation and feedback from ERG.	• Clean, well scrutinized datasets and interview scripts • Complete analysis do-files • Preliminary findings presentation • Draft assessment report in-line with analysis plan Presentation of preliminary findings when requested by UNICEF to correspond to key programmatic activities (e.g., Reference Group meeting)	1 February 2027

Report Finalization and Presentation Phase: The Team Leader will draft the evaluation report and provide actionable recommendations. The Team Leader will develop summary outputs, including an evaluation brief and presentation materials for stakeholders. The Team Leader will prepare a publication-ready manuscript capturing key lessons and insights.	• Final assessment report and annexes • PowerPoint Presentation • Assessment brief • Minutes of key meetings with the Reference Group • Revised theory of change • Monthly progress reports • Copy of the anonymised data collected during the assessment Presentation materials for the meetings with the Reference Group	15 March 2027

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

- **Minimum requirements:**
- **Education**: An advanced university degree (Master's degree required, PhD preferred) in disability studies, social sciences, public policy, international development, evaluation, or another relevant field.
- **Work Experience**: At least 10 years of progressively responsible professional experience in disability inclusion, programme assessment, evaluation, research, or inclusive development and humanitarian programming.
- **Skills** (optional):
- Strong technical expertise in disability inclusion, particularly in relation to children with disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Demonstrated experience conducting situation analyses, institutional readiness assessments, evaluations, or organizational capacity assessments.
- Demonstrated experience applying mixed-methods approaches, including desk reviews, surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observations and analysis of administrative and secondary data.

- Proven ability to engage meaningfully and ethically with persons with disabilities, children with disabilities, organizations of persons with disabilities and civil society organizations.
- Excellent analytical, report-writing, facilitation and presentation skills.
- Experience working with UNICEF and/or other United Nations agencies, government counterparts, humanitarian and development partners, or civil society organizations is a strong asset.
- **Language Requirements**: English
- **Desirables**: Experience working in complex, fragile or humanitarian contexts is highly desirable.
- **Technical requirements**: Technical proposal

  Technical proposal should contain:

  1. Context and understanding
  2. Methodology and Technical Approach
  3. General management appraoch
  4. Workplan and deliverables