

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Individual Consultant: Policy Framework for Peri-Urban Sanitation and Urban–Rural Convergence under Swachh Bharat Mission - (open to National Candidates only)

Duty Station: New Delhi

Contract Duration: 05 months.

Closing Date: 27 April 2026

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

India’s Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has achieved near-universal toilet access and significant reductions in open defecation across rural and urban areas. SBM-Gramin is implemented by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti, while SBM-Urban is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). UNICEF works closely with both Ministries to support policy development, implementation, monitoring, and sustainability of sanitation outcomes.

As India transitions from access creation to sustainability and service delivery, peri-urban areas—characterised by rapid population growth, changing land use, mixed rural-urban governance arrangements, and inadequate service infrastructure—have emerged as a critical gap. These areas face challenges in:

- Sustaining ODF and ODF Plus outcomes; and moving to ODF++ norms
- Achieving safely managed sanitation as per SDG definitions through in-situ or ex-situ management systems
- In the absence of sewage systems, managing faecal sludge and septage, including safe containment, emptying, transport, treatment, and reuse/disposal.
- Integrating solid and plastic waste management systems under urban-rural convergence with a focus of coordinated use of financial resources, infrastructure and human resources; and matter of the forward linkages of reusable waste.
- Operation and maintenance systems and sustainability of services; professionalisation of service delivery
- Clarifying institutional roles across Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), and line departments.
- The issue of funding, cost norms and transitional funding needs
- Integrating reporting and monitoring systems during transition

Existing SBM-G and SBM-U guidelines and advisories provide strong direction within their respective domains; however, policy and operational clarity is limited at the peri-urban interface, where responsibilities, financing, service standards, and monitoring often overlap or remain unclear.

In this context, UNICEF India has been requested to support the Government of India in developing a dedicated Policy Framework for Peri-Urban Sanitation, aligned with SBM-G Phase II and SBM-U 2.0, to enable effective urban–rural convergence, strengthen sanitation service systems, and ensure long-term environmental and public health outcomes.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the consultancy is to develop a comprehensive, implementable Policy Framework for Peri-Urban Sanitation that:

1. Enables convergence between SBM-Gramin and SBM-Urban for Peri urban areas; and enables transition from ODF+ to ODF++ status.
2. Advances safely managed sanitation (SDG 6.2)
3. Identifies the transitional areas from rural to urban areas that need specific intervention and provide specific inputs pertaining to the transition.
4. Strengthen the management of faecal sludge and septage management (FSSM), solid and plastic waste management and activate Urban-Rural convergence.
5. Strengthen Institutional systems for effective O&M and ensure sustainable service delivery.
6. Clarifies institutional roles, financing mechanisms and cost norms, service delivery models. Special attention will be given to transitional financing needs and cost norms for peri-urban areas, including shared infrastructure, interim service models, and phased transition from rural to urban financing mechanisms.
7. Helps integrate into existing reporting and monitoring frameworks for peri-urban contexts.

3. MAJOR TASKS AND ACTIVITIES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

Under the overall supervision of the WASH Specialist, UNICEF India, and in coordination with DDWS and MoHUA, the consultant will undertake the following:

1. **Desk Review and Situation Analysis**
 - Review SBM-G and SBM-U guidelines, advisories, technical manuals, and monitoring frameworks
 - Review national and international evidence on peri-urban sanitation, sanitation sustainability, and SDG 6.2
 - Identify key policy, institutional, financing, and service delivery gaps in peri-urban sanitation
 - Carry out consultations at national and field levels on relevant issues
2. **Urban–Rural Convergence Analysis**
 - Map roles and responsibilities of PRIs, ULBs, district authorities, and utilities in peri-urban areas
 - Identify convergence opportunities and bottlenecks between rural and urban sanitation systems
 - Document relevant national and state-level good practices
3. **Development of the Policy Framework**

The framework should explicitly address:

- Definition and typologies of peri-urban areas in the context of sanitation services
 - Service standards for ODF, ODF Plus, and safely managed sanitation
 - Faecal sludge and septage management models (including regional/shared infrastructure)
 - Solid and plastic waste management integration
 - Occupational safety and dignity of sanitation workers
 - Financing mechanisms, incentives, and O&M sustainability
 - Equity, gender, and inclusion considerations
 - Environmental and public health safeguards
4. **Implementation and Monitoring Framework**
 - Propose phased implementation pathways (pilot → scale-up)
 - Identify the transitional areas from rural to urban areas that need intervention
 - Provide specific inputs pertaining to the transition from rural to urban areas
 - Identify transitional financing needs and cost norms, including shared infrastructure, interim service models, and phased transition from rural to urban financing mechanisms
 - Develop an institutional coordination and governance model
 - The framework will recommend adaptations within existing SBM-G and SBM-U monitoring systems to enable tracking of peri-urban sanitation outcomes during transition
 5. **Consultations and Validation**
 - Conduct consultations with Government stakeholders and partners (as guided by UNICEF)
 - Facilitate validation and incorporate feedback into the final framework

Proposed State Visits and Field Consultations

To ensure that the proposed Strategic Framework is evidence-based, implementable, and responsive to diverse peri-urban sanitation realities, the consultancy will include targeted field consultations in three representative states, covering two rural–urban continuum locations in each state. The state and site selection is intended to capture variations in urbanisation patterns, institutional arrangements, sanitation service maturity, and financing contexts, while remaining aligned with the objectives of SBM-G Phase II and SBM-U 2.0.

The proposed approach will help validate peri-urban sanitation typologies, understand transition pathways from rural to urban service models, and identify scalable convergence mechanisms between PRIs and ULBs.

Proposed States and Indicative Locations

1. Maharashtra (alternate – Karnataka) – High urbanisation and advanced sanitation systems
Maharashtra represents a highly urbanised context with significant peri-urban expansion around major cities, and relatively mature sanitation service systems, including faecal sludge and septage management (FSSM) and co-treatment models.

Indicative locations:

- Peri-urban Gram Panchayats adjoining Pune Municipal Corporation
- Village clusters and census towns along the Nagpur urban fringe

2. Odisha (alternate – MP) – Transitional / medium urbanisation state
Odisha reflects a transitional context, with rapidly growing peri-urban settlements, mixed governance arrangements, and strong SBM-G implementation experience. The state also offers insights into sanitation sustainability in environmentally and climate-vulnerable settings.

Indicative locations:

- Peri-urban settlements along the Bhubaneswar–Cuttack urban corridor
- Growth centres and adjoining Gram Panchayats around Rourkela

3. Uttar Pradesh (alternate – Bihar) – Predominantly rural, high-density state
Uttar Pradesh represents a high-density, predominantly rural context with emerging peri-urbanisation, continued reliance on on-site sanitation systems, and significant institutional and financing challenges during rural–urban transition.

Indicative locations:

- Peri-urban Gram Panchayats in Amroha district (primary)
- Barabanki or Bareilly districts (alternate, if required)

Across these locations, consultations will focus on governance overlaps between PRIs and ULBs, service delivery and O&M models, FSM and waste management arrangements, transitional cost norms, and integration with SBM monitoring systems.

Indicative Stakeholders for Consultation

Consultations will be conducted at state, district/ULB, and community levels, and may include:

- State Departments of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Urban Development
- SBM-G and SBM-U State Mission Directorates
- District administrations, Urban Local Bodies, and Gram Panchayats
- Operators of FSTPs, STPs, and co-treatment facilities; FSM service providers
- Sanitation workers, SBM field functionaries, and Swachhagrahis
- Local NGOs, technical institutions, and community/user representatives

Consultations will be organized by the Consultant through his /her 's own efforts with support of UNICEF National and State Field Offices along with partners, as possible. The consultations will directly inform the development of practical, scalable recommendations for peri-urban sanitation governance, service delivery, financing, and monitoring.

Work Assignment Overview (Include Major Tasks and Activities)	Deliverables/Outputs Upon submission and acceptance by UNICEF	Timeline for submission of Deliverable
<p>1. Inception & Detailed Work Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review TOR, SBM-G and SBM-U guidelines, advisories, and relevant background documents • Develop detailed methodology, analytical framework, consultation plan, and annotated outline of the peri-urban sanitation policy framework • Initial coordination meetings with UNICEF and key Government counterparts 	<p>Inception Report including methodology, workplan, policy framework outline, and consultation approach</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks of contract start</p>
<p>2. Desk Review & Situation Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review SBM-G Phase II and SBM-U 2.0 guidelines, advisories, and technical manuals • Review evidence on ODF sustainability, safely managed sanitation (SDG 6.2), FSSM, SLWM, plastic waste management, peri-urban sanitation • Mapping peri-urban sanitation challenges and urban–rural convergence gaps 	<p>Situation Analysis & Gap Assessment Report for peri-urban sanitation and urban–rural convergence</p>	<p>Within 6 weeks of contract start</p>
<p>3. Drafting of Peri-Urban Sanitation Policy Framework (Core Deliverable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft integrated policy framework covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Definition and typologies of peri-urban areas – ODF/ODF Plus sustainability – Safely managed sanitation (SDG 6.2) – FSSM and septage management models – Solid & plastic waste management – Institutional roles and convergence mechanisms – Financing and O&M sustainability – Gender, equity, occupational safety and environmental safeguards 	<p>Draft Policy Framework for Peri-Urban Sanitation</p>	<p>Within 10 weeks of contract start</p>
<p>4. Implementation & Monitoring Framework Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop phased implementation roadmap (pilot → scale-up) • Propose governance and coordination mechanisms for peri-urban areas • Develop monitoring indicators aligned with SBM-G, SBM-U and SDG 6.2 	<p>Implementation & Monitoring Framework (stand-alone section or annex)</p>	<p>Within 12 weeks of contract start</p>
<p>5. Stakeholder Consultation & Validation</p>	<p>(i) Consultation Summary & (ii) Revised Draft Policy Framework</p>	<p>Within 14 weeks of contract start</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support UNICEF in consultations/validation workshop(s) with Government and partners • Incorporate feedback from DDWS, MoHUA, states and other stakeholders 		
6. Finalisation & Knowledge Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise policy framework incorporating all comments • Prepare concise executive summary/policy brief/PPT for senior decision-makers 	(i) Final Policy Framework for Peri-Urban Sanitation (ii) Policy Brief (iii) PPT	Within 16 weeks of contract start

4. DUTY STATION

New Delhi (Consultant is expected to work remotely)

5. OFFICIAL TRAVEL INVOLVED (ITINERARY AND DURATION)

Three (05) air travel trips – (States = 3 states x 4 days each) + (Delhi = 2 visits x 2 days = 4 days).

6. ESTIMATED DURATION OF CONTRACT

05 months.

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

Qualification:

Master's degree in science and social sciences/ public policy/ urban planning/ environmental engineering/ sanitation/WASH/ development studies/ or related fields.

Years of Experience/Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required:

- Minimum 7 years of professional experience in rural and urban sanitation or WASH policy, or environmental management at a senior national level.
- Demonstrated experience in policy advocacy and development.
- Strong understanding of SBM-G, SBM-U, FSSM, and SDG 6.2.
- Experience working with Government/PSUs or UN agencies or large CSOs.
- Master's degree in science and social sciences/ public policy/ urban planning/ environmental engineering/ sanitation/WASH/ development studies/ or related fields.

8. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA (WITH WEIGHTS FOR EACH CRITERIA)

Technical and Financial ratio is 75:25 (technical proposal-75 points and financial proposal-25 points)

S. No.	Evaluation Criteria	Max. Marks	Min. Marks
1.	Minimum 7 years in rural and urban sanitation or WASH policy, or environmental management at a senior national level	20	14

2.	Developed or contributed to developing at least 2 documents in areas such as policy advocacy, policy development, rural and/or urban sanitation in the Indian context.	20	15
3.	Has provided inputs as a technical expert in at least 2 national level consultations / committees/conclaves/events related to SBM Rural and/or SBM urban.	20	15
4.	Demonstrated experience of working at least for 3 years with Government/PSUs or UN agencies or large CSOs.	20	12
	Total	80	56

* Applicants are required to provide documentary evidence demonstrating compliance with all the above-mentioned criteria.

Note: The candidates need to achieve a minimum score mentioned above for each of the criteria to be considered technically qualified.

Note: Qualifying score in technical evaluation is 56 out of 80 marks.

9. 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.

10. 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 to ensure 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.

HOW TO APPLY:

The application to be submitted through the online portal and must contain **three** separate attachments, as follows:

1. A cover letter (max 2 pages) outlining understanding of the scope and activities, motivation to undertake it and demonstrating fit for the assignment **(to be uploaded online under “Cover Letter” tab)**.
2. An updated CV demonstrating all requirements stated above **(to be uploaded online under “Resume” tab)**.

3. A financial proposal indicating all-inclusive amount (professional fee + travel cost as applicable) against each of the deliverable, as per the template attached. Please do not forget to specify your name in the file while saving **(to be uploaded online under “Financial Proposal” tab)**.

Important Note: Please do not indicate financials anywhere else in the online application form, please mark "n/a or 00", under the fee related questions in the online application form.

Without all the above 03 documents, your application will be considered incomplete and invalid and will not be considered further.

- Any attempt to unduly influence UNICEF’s selection process will lead to automatic disqualification of the applicant.
- Joint applications of two or more individuals are not accepted.
- Please note, UNICEF does not charge any fee during any stage of the process.
- Women, trans, non-binary and gender diverse candidates meeting the requirements are strongly encouraged to apply.
- UNICEF is committed to diversity and inclusion and encourages qualified candidates from all backgrounds including persons living with disabilities to apply.
- General Terms and Conditions for the Consultancy Contract is attached, for your reference.

For any clarifications, please contact:

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