

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS

Title of Assignment	<i>National Consultancy for Budget Analysis for UNICEF Budget Briefs</i>	
Requesting Section	Social Policy	
Location	Place of assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assignment will be based in Lilongwe with expected visits to 5 districts (Dowa, Blantyre, Kasungu, Mangochi and Rumphu) for analysis of devolved nutrition budgets • The consultancy is not office-based; however, the consultant is expected to attend related and scheduled meetings and briefing sessions at UNICEF and with Government • The consultant will also be expected to participate in meetings with Sections, Government, CSO and Parliamentary engagements 	
Contract Duration in months, including a review period following the submission of the final deliverable	8 months plus 2 weeks non-costed review period following the submission of the final deliverable.	
Estimated number of working days	170 days	
Planned Start and End Date	From: 13 April 2026	To: 31 December 2026

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

UNICEF is the lead UN agency supporting the Government of Malawi to ensure all children have equitable access to quality, affordable services that enable them to survive, learn, and develop in a safe and protective environment. Since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, Malawi has made progress in child health, nutrition, and primary education. However, monetary and multidimensional child poverty remain high, with UNICEF estimating in 2024 that **69.6% of children are deprived of two or more essential services**, including education, health, and adequate housing.

Limited and inequitable public spending contributes to these deprivations. Although the share of the national budget allocated to social sectors increased from **31% in 2024/25 to 32.3% in 2025/26**, fiscal space remains tight and reductions in official development assistance threaten the sustainability of social spending. Education receives the largest allocation (16.6% of the 2025/26 budget), followed by health (9.5%), social protection (3.8%), and WASH (3.5%). Against this backdrop, UNICEF continues to advocate for increased and better-quality public investment in children, informed by robust budget analysis.

UNICEF’s central concern is whether public budgets and fiscal policies are responsive to children’s needs and whether resources are used as intended. Budget Briefs have been a key tool for tracking social spending, but further analysis is needed to understand the drivers of allocations and spending patterns, and to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditures within a constrained fiscal environment.

To support this work, UNICEF seeks to hire a National Consultant to analyze socio-economic policies and government budgets from a child rights perspective. The consultant will assess the size, composition, and efficiency of social sector spending across social protection, education, health, child protection, and WASH,

generating evidence to inform UNICEF’s advocacy and capacity-building efforts with government at national and subnational levels in Malawi.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of this assignment is to generate timely, robust analysis of socio-economic policies and government spending, to enhance evidence-based engagement with policymakers at national and subnational levels. The assignment aims to support UNICEF’s broader objective of promoting public spending that is increasingly child-responsive, equitable, efficient, and effective. The consultant will update budget trackers, draft sectoral Budget Briefs, and contribute to budget advocacy plans. This includes coordinating meetings and workshops with key stakeholders, collecting and analyzing social sector budget data, and transforming this evidence into high-quality analytical Budget Briefs and advocacy products.

SCOPE OF WORK/OBJECTIVES

- **Update Budget Trackers:** Collect budgetary and non-budgetary data for the 2025/26 (revised) and 2026/27 financial years and update existing budget trackers. This will require engaging key Government entities, including the Ministry of Finance, relevant sector ministries, and the National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC).
- **Develop Budget Briefs:** Responsible for the budget analysis and drafting of sectoral Budget Briefs for 2026/27. All briefs will undergo internal review and quality assurance by UNICEF.
- **Contribute to Advocacy Plans:** Provide inputs for advocacy plans for each Budget Brief, in collaboration with the Communications, Advocacy and Partnerships team, using existing templates, to guide UNICEF’s evidence-based advocacy with government and partners.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

To whom will the consultant report (supervisory and any other reporting/communication lines):

- The consultant will report to the UNICEF’s Chief of Social Policy, with frequent coordination of UNICEF sections and Government stakeholders, who are primarily based in Lilongwe.
- The consultant will furthermore consult and interact with other key stakeholders including government ministries and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

What type of reporting will be expected from the consultant and in what format/style will the submissions of reports/outputs be done:

- Brief monthly monitoring reports on the progress of Budget Briefs.
- Regular discussions will be held face-to-face and virtually, and the consultant is expected to stay in touch via telephone, emails, and other online platforms.

How will consultant deliver work and when will reporting be done:

- The consultant will be home based.
- The consultant will visit data providers and stakeholders to ensure smooth data collection and validation processes.
- The consultant will provide monthly deliverables based on an agreed work plan and delivery schedule.

- In the first week, the consultant will produce an inception report with work plan outlining the key deliverables, in consultation with the contract supervisor. Where amendments arise, a formal email will be shared.
- The consultant will present the draft documents and the final report to UNICEF as agreed during the time of engagement and as per the work plan.

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

In alignment with the scope of work described above, the consultant will be expected to perform the following activities and deliverables per the schedule and estimated dates below.

Table 1: Expected Deliverables against Task and Milestones`

Task/Milestone overview	Deliverable/Outcome (e.g. Inception, progress, final reports, training material, workshop, etc.)	Delivery deadline (date)	Estimated cost-percentage payable
Inception Report	Inception report for the Budget Briefs, detailing methodology, approach and key timelines	30/04/2026	5%
Update of Budget Trackers	8 Updated Budget Trackers – National, Social Protection, WASH, Health, Education, Nutrition, Child Protection and Disability	31/05/2026	15%
Production of Social Protection and National Budget Briefs for 2026/27	2 Budget Briefs: National and on Social Protection are produced for FY2026/27 + slide decks	30/06/2026	15%
Production of Education, WASH and Health Budget Briefs for 2026/27	3 Budget Briefs on Education, WASH and Health produced for FY2026/27 + slide decks	31/07/2026	15%
Production of Child Protection and Disability Budget Briefs for 2026/27	2 Budget Briefs on Child Protection and Disability produced for FY2026/27 + slide decks	30/08/2026	10%
Production of Nutrition Budget Brief for 2026/27, that includes detailed analysis of nutrition budgets in key sectors of agriculture, health, education and social protection in line with the systems approach	1 Nutrition Budget Brief produced for FY2026/27, with clear sectoral lens + slide decks	30/09/2026	10%
Support Ministry of Gender with Child Protection Budget Tagging & Devolution M&E Framework	Child Protection Budget Tagging tool and M&E Devolution Framework are finalized and rolled out at national and district level	15/10/2026	10%
Budget Analysis for Devolved Nutrition Budget, with a focus on 5 of 10 focus districts (Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Lilongwe Dowa, Kasungu, Rumphu)	1 district level Nutrition Brief produced + slide decks	30/10/2026	10%
Inputs to Advocacy Plans for each of the Budget Brief in collaboration with	Draft Inputs to Advocacy Plans produced for National, Social Protection, WASH, Health,	30/11/2026	5%

Task/Milestone overview	Deliverable/Outcome (e.g. Inception, progress, final reports, training material, workshop, etc.)	Delivery deadline (date)	Estimated cost-percentage payable
Communication, Advocacy and Partnerships (CAP) Section.	Education, Nutrition, Child Protection and Disability Budget Briefs for finalization by Communication, Advocacy and Partnerships (CAP)		
Undertaking Mid-Year Budget Review (MYBR) Analysis for 2026/27 National Budget	1 2026/27 MYBR Analysis (Brief write up – max 10 pages + slide deck for Parliament engagement)	15/12/2026	5%
Total			100 %
Non-costed 2-week review period		31 Dec 2026	0%

However, as the actual starting date may impact the dates estimated in the TOR, a detailed workplan with exact timeframes and actual delivery dates will be jointly agreed upon between the consultant and the supervisor upon contract signature and which will be updated on a regular basis as needed.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR EVALUATION OF RESULTS

The performance of work will be evaluated based on the following indicators:

- Completion of tasks specified in Terms of Reference: Ensuring all tasks outlined in the TOR are completed effectively.
- Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables: Adherence to the project timeline and deadlines for deliverables.
- Quality of work: Accuracy, completeness, and relevance of the Budget Briefs
- Demonstrating high standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF and counterparts: Effective collaboration and communication with UNICEF and other stakeholders.
- Adherence to UNICEF’s child safeguarding policy: Compliance with UNICEF’s policies on child safeguarding.
- Process documentation: Thoroughness and clarity of the implementation summary and documentation of lessons learned

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

All payments, without exception, will be made upon certification from the supervisor of the contract of the satisfactory and quality completion and submission of deliverables and upon receipt of the respective and approved invoice. 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.

The consultancy cost will be based on an all-inclusive fee basis which will include all costs related to this assignment including professional fee, travel and living cost, transportation cost (fuel, car hire, etc.), stationery, communications etc. No other costs are payable under this consultancy.

DESIRED COMPETENCIES, TECHNICAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Academic qualification:

- A University Degree in economics, business studies, development studies and any other related social sciences is required.

Work experience:

- At least 7 years of working experience in macroeconomics and budget analysis, public finance management or related fields is required.
- Demonstrated experience in developing UNICEF Budget Briefs is an asset
- Experience working with Government and stakeholders (CSOs, Parliament, Local Councils) is required.
- Previous experience with a UN agency is highly desirable.

Technical Skills, Knowledge, and Competencies

- Strong analytical and data-management skills, with proficiency in Excel and other data analysis tools are required.
- Demonstrated ability to synthesize large volumes of information into clear, accessible outputs is highly desirable.
- Solid understanding of economic and financial analysis, including budgetary and fiscal policy frameworks is required.
- Knowledge of Malawi's budget cycle, key public finance actors, and the functioning of national budgeting and financial management systems (including PBBS, IFMIS, and the Chart of Accounts) is required.
- Excellent communication and facilitation abilities, with a proven capacity to work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders is highly desirable.

Languages: Excellent verbal and written communication skills in English and Chichewa (strong oral & written skills) is required.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

UNICEF will maintain regular communication with the consultant, providing ongoing feedback, guidance, and necessary support to ensure the objectives of the assignment are met. UNICEF will also remain informed of any emerging issues related to performance and quality of work.

As per policy on consultants, the individual will be expected to complete a list of mandatory training, including policies on Prohibiting and Combatting Fraud and Corruption, Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority and other relevant policies for their information and acknowledgement upon acceptance of the offer.

Before the issuance of the official contract, the individual consultant is requested to:

- complete the applicable mandatory trainings.
- ensure that the visa (where applicable) and health insurance required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract. The consultant is solely responsible for both the visa and own health insurance.

- the selected consultant is 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. The vaccine mandate 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 candidates to disclose their disability during their application in case they need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in their assignment.

Consultants must have their own equipment, tools and materials needed to perform their services. They will use their own laptops/computers, any application or system needed to complete the assignment.

The access to UNICEF email and system is restricted to UNICEF staff therefore consultants should not be granted access unless it is imperative to complete assignment. The need for email access will be determined in consultation with the contract supervisor and will require approval from management.

Details on working arrangements:

- The consultant will primarily work remotely with occasional in-office presence as required for meetings and workshops.
- Visits within Lilongwe to data providers and stakeholders will be necessary to ensure smooth data collection and validation processes.
- The consultant will have to travel to at five districts especially for the devolved nutrition budget analysis
- Any additional resources or support required for the successful completion of the assignment will be discussed and provided as needed and subject to approval.

CONDITIONS

- The consultancy will be for a period of 8 months.
- The candidate selected will be governed by and subject to UNICEF's General Terms and Conditions for individual contracts.
- No contract may commence unless the contract is signed by both UNICEF and the consultant.
- The consultant will be based in Lilongwe
- The consultant will be paid an all-inclusive fee (professional fee, travel, living costs, transport, stationary, communication and other miscellaneous expenses) as per the stipulated deliverable and payment schedule.
- The consultant is not entitled to additional payment for overtime, weekends or public holidays. There will be no additional costs or payments outside of the all-inclusive fee.
- No travel should take place without an email travel authorization from section prior to the commencement of the journey from the duty station.
- Standard UNICEF procedures will apply for invoicing and all other financial management requirements set out in the contract.
- Standard penalty clauses will also apply for late and poor-quality deliverables. The supervisor of the contract will provide the consultant with the criteria for the evaluation of the quality of each deliverable.
- Additional details of UNICEF rules, regulations and conditions will be attached to the contract.
- The consultant will not have supervisory responsibilities or authority on UNICEF budget.

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy 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.
- Consultants 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.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested consultants should provide the following through the online application:

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. Brief technical proposal (no longer than four pages) demonstrating the consultant’s understanding of the assignment and approach/methodology to the assignment
3. At least three work samples that are relevant to this TOR and solely the candidate’s own original work
4. Financial proposal including a breakdown of the all-inclusive fee (including professional fees, travel, living cost, visa and other costs where applicable). Complete the attached form.



Financial
Proposal.xlsx

5. References details from at least 3 supervisors, including the current supervisor.