**UNICEF Lao PDR**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SERVICES CONTRACT**

**Title:** Desk review and rapid assessment of community needs to inform development of a Parenting Package Addressing health, WASH, nutrition, child protection and education for Laos

**Requesting Section:** Communication

**Proposed level:** P4 or NOD

**Duration:** 40 days

**Start and end dates:** 19th March to 18th May 2018

**Duty Station:** Home-based with up to 16 days in Laos (Vientiane and provinces)

**Supervisor:** Maria Fernandez

**Related Country Programme Outcome/Output:**

**Outcome 5.** By 2021, national policy environment and systems are improved for disadvantaged children, guided by knowledge and data.

Output 2: Communication for Development (C4D). By the end of 2021, social norms and behaviours related to child survival, development and protection are improved through effectively coordinated C4D initiatives, technical oversight and institutional capacity building.

1. **Purpose of Assignment:**

The first years of a child’s life form the foundations for future development.[[1]](#footnote-1) With as many as 1,000 new neural connections being made every second, these early years, if nurtured, have the potential to enhance a child’s development, and buffer against external risk factors, setting him or her in good stead for a productive and healthy life.[[2]](#footnote-2) Unfortunately however, an estimated 43% of children under the age of 5 years in low and middle income countries do not achieve their full potential due to risks of poverty, inadequate nutrition, lack of access to basic services and limited or no enriching opportunities.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Inevitably, parents and caregivers, play a critical role in their children’s early development, and their behaviours have the power to either enhance or hinder their children’s future development and potential. Supporting parents to understand the importance of the early years and to commit to adopting behaviours that nurture a child’s development is essential if we want to see future generations fulfilling their potential.

To this end, UNICEF Laos, plans to develop a comprehensive parenting package that will engage parents and provide them with knowledge, skills and commitment to perform protective and nurturing early childhood development (ECD) behaviours in all five domains of childcare, namely: health, nutrition, responsive care-giving, security and safety, and early learning. In order to do this, a desk review and a needs assessment will be carried out. The findings will be used as a basis to develop the package.

1. **Objective**

The overall goal of the consultancy is to conduct a desk review, complemented by a needs assessment with representatives from pre-defined target communities.

It is expected that the selected consultant reviews available literature and documents exploring ECD related behaviours in the Laos context. To complement this, he or she will have to do a rapid needs assessment with targeted communities to understand the beneficiaries’ needs, desires and aspirations. Special consideration will need to be given to ensuring representation of the most vulnerable families, including those with parents and/or children with disabilities. The consultant will also interview front line workers such as Lao Women’s Union staff and volunteers, and health workers, as well as key community influencers, to better understand their needs.

The final document will inform the branding, content, approach and delivery modalities of the parenting package, including supporting communication channels.

It is expected that the desk review and needs assessment will respond to the following objectives:

* Document good practices and lessons learned from past/ongoing related activities (i.e. parenting education for reading promotion).
* Identify the key ECD behaviours that need to be addressed by the parenting package and their determinants
* Define beneficiaries’ preferences for delivery modality of the package, facilitator, timing and setting of the parenting package
* Describe beneficiaries’ needs and desires in terms of package content
* Describe beneficiaries’ aspirations and desires for their children around which to frame the parenting package messaging
* Understand how gender, family and community dynamics influence parenting practices/behaviours and how to take this into consideration for the development of the package.
* Provide recommendations on the content, tools and delivery modality for a successful and sustainable parenting package for Laos
1. **Background/Rationale**

While Laos has made significant advances in health and social outcomes for children over the past decade, challenges still exist. Twenty-seven percent of children under the age of 5 years are underweight, and 36% are stunted. [[4]](#footnote-4) Child mortality remains high at 88 deaths per 1,000 live births, and immunization coverage remains low.[[5]](#footnote-5) Over three quarters of children aged 2 to 14 years are subject to at least one form of psychological or physical aggression from an adult in their household, [[6]](#footnote-6) and almost 40% of the population has no sanitation facilities.[[7]](#footnote-7) Moreover, aggregate data hide substantial geographical, gender, social and ethnic disparities. Children from rural areas, girls and children from non-Lao-Thai ethnic groups in fact, continue to fare more poorly than other children across health, nutrition, education and protection indicators, and social exclusion is an ongoing barrier for children and families affected by disability.[[8]](#footnote-8) [[9]](#footnote-9)

Taking stock of these realities, and recognizing the impact that parent’s and caregivers can have on the first years of their children’s lives and their future cognitive, social and emotional development, UNICEF Laos has committed to working with the Lao Women Union to develop and deliver a parenting package that empowers and motivates parents to adopt healthy behaviours that contribute to their children’s optimal ECD.

To be successful, the package will need to respond to the beneficiaries’ needs, be comprised of content that is mutually reinforcing, and be framed in a way that inspires and motivates parents to act. In order to inform the package’s content, a desk review, complemented by a rapid needs assessment with representatives of intended communication participants, will be conducted. It is expected that this exercise will provide some insights into common determinants across behaviours that can be used to frame the whole package and its messaging. Additionally, the desk review should also identify the the most appropriate primary and supporting channels to reach the intended beneficiaries.

1. **Scope of Work/ Work Assignments**

The following tasks are expected from the selected consultant:

* Prepare a detailed work plan
* Review all documents provided by UNICEF Laos relating to ECD in the areas of health, nutrition, WASH, child protection, education and disability
* Review any other supporting documents as recommended by UNICEF
* Develop a brief interview and focus group discussion guide to highlight the main areas that will be explored in interviews, FGDs and consultations
* Hold key informant interviews and consultations with UNICEF ECD sector focal points and key counterparts as identified together with UNICEF such as representatives from the Lao Women Union Representatives, the Lao Front for Reconstruction and the Lao Disabled People Association
* Conduct consultations/focus group discussions with sample communities in two focus provinces (one in the North and one in the South) agreed upon together with UNICEF, with representatives of the intended beneficiaries and with community influentials. Special care will need to be given to ensuring representation of vulnerable families, including parents with a disability and/or of children with disabilities.
* Submit a content outline of key areas that will be covered by the final report
* Draft initial report summarizing main findings from the desk review and recommendations for the development of the parenting package
* Finalize report based on UNICEF’sfeedback
* Develop and finalize a short summary document of key findings and recommendations from the report that can be used for dissemination to partners and other relevant actors
1. **Duration:**

40 working days, with a maximum of 16 days, including travel, in-country, between 15 March

 and 18 May

1. **Work Schedule:**

It is expected that the consultant begins work by 15th March and submits the final required documents by 18 May 2018.

1. **Deliverables:**

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| **Task** | **Timeframe** | **Deliverables** | **Timeline** |
| * Prepare work plan
* Review all documents provided by UNICEF Laos relating to ECD in the areas of health, nutrition, WASH, child protection and education
* Review any other supporting document as recommended by UNICEF Laos
* Develop brief interview and focus group discussion guide, that is inclusive and applicable to people with disabilities, based on findings from the desk reviews to highlight main areas that will be explored
 | 10 working days | Draft key informant interview and FGD guides | By 30 March |
| * Hold key informant interviews and consultations with UNICEF ECD sector focal points and with key counterparts
* Conduct consultations / FGDs with sample communities in three provinces, with representatives of the intended beneficiaries and community influential, which should include people affected by disabilities
 | 16 working days  | Document summarizing key findings from interviews, consultations and FGDs | 1 – 16 April |
| * Develop a content outline of areas that will be covered by the final report based on results from the desk review and consultations / interviews
 | 1 day | Content outline of final report | By 20th April |
| * Draft initial report
 | 8 working days | Draft report summarizing main findings from the desk review and recommendations covering:* Main behaviours that need to be addressed by the parenting package in all health, nutrition, WASH, child protection and education
* Common determinants across behaviours
* Key aspirations and desires of parents for their children
* Beneficiaries preferences and needs for a parenting package (including delivery modality, tools, facilitators and timing)
 | By 3rd May |
| * Finalize report based on UNICEF feedback
 | 3 working days | Final report  | By 16th May |
| * Develop and finalize a short summary document of key findings and recommendations for dissemination
 | 2 working days | 2 to 4 pager brief containing key findings and recommendation from desk review | By 18th May |

1. **Reporting requirements:**

The consultant will report to the Chief of Communications in the Laos Country office, with technical support from the shared C4D Specialist based in Myanmar

1. **Payment Schedule:**

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| **Payment**  | **Conditions** |
| 20% | On receipt of guide for key informant interviews and FDGs |
| 20% | On receipt of:* Summary of results from key informant interviews, consultations and FDGs
* Content outline for the report
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| 60% | On receipt of:* Final desk review document, including recommendations for parenting package in Laos
* Two-to four pages brief detailing main findings from the desk review for dissemination
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1. **Type of Supervision that will be Provided:**

UNICEF will:

* Provide all documents that need to be reviewed
* Organize and facilitate logistical support to meet with key informants and community members being interviewed and/or consulted with
* Provide a translator if required
1. **Administrative Issues, including Consultant’s Workplace and Official Travel involved:**

It is expected that the consultant will work from home, with access to a reliable internet connection. For a maximum of 10 days (including travel days), the consultant will come to Laos. Though based in Vientiane, in-country travel is planned to conduct consultations, interviews and focus group discussions with key informants and representatives of the selected beneficiary communities.

The consultant will be required to use his or her own laptop.

The consultant is expected to function relatively independently and take initiatives as needed.

**Life and health insurance**

UNICEF does not provide or arrange life or health insurance coverage for consultants and individual contractors, and consultants and individual contractors are not eligible to participate in the life and health insurance schemes available to United Nations staff members. Consultants and individual contractors are fully responsible for arranging, at their own expense, such life, health and other forms of insurance covering the period of their services as they consider appropriate. The responsibility of UNICEF is limited solely to the payment of compensation for service-incurred death, injury or illness as per the provisions detailed below.

**Insurance for service-incurred death, injury or illness**

Consultants and individual contractors who are authorized to travel at UNICEF expense or who are required under their contract to perform services in a UNICEF or United Nations office shall be provided with insurance coverage, through a UNICEF-retained third party insurance provider, covering death, injury and illness attributable to the performance of official UNICEF duties. Compensation in the event of service-incurred death, injury or illness shall be equivalent to amounts stipulated in the agreement between UNICEF and the insurance provider.

1. **Education, Qualifications and Experience Required**
* An advanced degree in the areas of communication for development, communication, behaviour change communication, sociology, anthropology, public health or other related social sciences
* At least 5 years’ professional experience in Communication for Development, International Development, Child Rights, Child Health or education in the development context
* Knowledge of behaviour change and social norm change processes
* Familiarity with participatory processes, and community led interventions
* Experience of developing packages to engage with low literacy communities is an advantage
* Excellent interviewing and analytical skills
* Experience in research, and/or in conducting literature/desk reviews
* Excellent writing skills in English
* Experience of working in one or more areas of early childhood development is an advantage
* Strong interpersonal communication skills, ability to coordinate and synchronize work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds
* Flexible and responsive to recommended changes as part of the review and feedback process
* Experience of working in Laos, or the South East Asian context is an advantage
* Fluency in English is a must. Knowledge of Lao language is an advantage
* Experience of working with UN agencies and/or on UN priorities (human rights based approach, vulnerability and equity, disability etc.)

Prepared by: Maria Fernandez, Chief of Communication

Reviewed by Operations Manager:

Approved by Myo - Zin Nyunt, Deputy Representative

1. UNICEF (2014) Building Better Brains: New Frontiers in Early Childhood Development. [*https://www.unicef.org/thailand/Building-better-brains-EN.PDF*](https://www.unicef.org/thailand/Building-better-brains-EN.PDF) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lori G. Irwin, ‘Early Childhood Development: A Powerful Equalizer’, World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Development of Health, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Maureen M. Black, et al. (2016), ‘Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course’, *The Lancet*, series 0140-6736, no. 16, 4 October 2016, p. 2. http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(16)31389-7.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lao [https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR268/FR268.pdfChild](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Caradice%5CDocuments%5CLAOS%5CParenting%20Package%5CChild) Anthropometric Assessment Survey (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. UNICEF (2013) Laos PDR Country Kit: Health [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lao Social Indicator Survey, *op.cit.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lao Social indicator Survey, op. cit [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. UNICEF (2017) Violence Against Children Survey in Lao PDR. Full Report (not for circulation yet) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)