

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS

Title of Assignment	EVIDENCE AND DATA SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS	
Requesting Section	Research, Evaluation, Knowledge and Management (REKM)	
Location	Place of Assignment: Malawi however consultant will work remotely	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Home Based <input type="checkbox"/> Office Based:	
Contract Duration	6 Months 3 weeks	
Number of working days	75 working days	
Planned Start and End Date	From: 5 August 2022	To: 28 February 2023

BACKGROUND

UNICEF Malawi places evidence-informed thinking at the heart of its strategic planning. Evidence is key to understanding the barriers that hold Malawian children back, and to developing the solutions that can overcome those barriers to ensure that no child is left behind. Malawi UNICEF Country Office undertakes and commissions evaluations, research and studies on emerging or current issues of relevance for children to inform the strategic directions, policies and programmes of UNICEF and its partners. The office explores emerging issues, identifies data and research gaps, and brings together existing evidence to support or undertake new research, data collection and analysis to address critical questions within the Malawi Country Office.

The Research, Evaluation and Knowledge Management (REKM) section within which this consultancy assignment is located plays a leading role in building a knowledge culture across UNICEF-Malawi and beyond by providing essential guidance and tools to strengthen the generation, communication and use of evidence in decision-making including across the following areas:-

Ethical Evidence Generation

The REKM Section provides substantial advisory support to ensure the application of ethical standards across all of Malawi UNICEF's research, evaluation, and data collection activities, particularly those that engage with children.

Research Uptake and Impact

The section works with UNICEF colleagues to enhance research uptake by commissioning independently verifiable studies, supporting thinking about use of evidence for programme improvement and brokering knowledge translation activities with external partners.

Building Skills and Capacities Internally and with Research Partners

The section produces a variety of training and capacity-building tools for UNICEF staff and others including methodological briefs, online and face to face training courses and webinars. It works to bring together civil society, academic and government partners to strengthen research ecosystems including enhancing the use of evidence in policy and programming and strengthening evidence literacy and critical thinking.

Evidence Synthesis

To frame UNICEF-Malawi research in the context of the global body of evidence, the section works with key partners to produce evidence synthesis products, such as Evidence Maps, Evidence Gap Maps, Systematic Reviews, Rapid Evidence Assessments and Rapid Reviews.

Therefore, the REKM section would like to know more about the nature and distribution of evidence to inform programming and future research. To this end, UNICEF-Malawi seeks the services of a Consultant to carry out Evidence Synthesis to inform and support programmes through secondary analysis, meta-reviews and synthesis work based on evidence collected through UNICEF-Malawi

research and evaluation reports; including documentation of lessons learnt to inform programme course corrections and improvement.

Malawi Country Programme

The overall goal of the UNICEF Malawi Country Programme of Cooperation, 2019-2023 is to contribute to the Government of Malawi's efforts to implement and decentralize policies related to children, focusing on the most disadvantaged and deprived. The CP is working on having the children's rights progressively respected and fulfilled so they survive, grow and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. The CP is aligned with country and UNICEF regional and global priorities and is expected to contribute to the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III, 2018- 2022, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), 2019-2023, while concurrently working toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The CP has four pillars that are supportive of a rights-based, equity-focused and life-cycle approach, including (1) Early Childhood Pillar, aged 0-5, with a focus on the first 1,000 days; (2) School-age Children Pillar, aged 6 up to 18, with a focus on young adolescents, aged 10-14; (3) Child-friendly, Inclusive, Resilient Communities Pillar that supports an enabling environment for the realization of the goals of the other two pillars encompassing the full life cycle of childhood; and (4) Programme Effectiveness Pillar, which supports quality assurance and cross-cutting programmatic and operational elements to facilitate coordination and implementation of risk-informed programmes.

JUSTIFICATION

Evidence synthesis products - particularly Meta Reviews, Evidence Gap Maps (EGMs), Rapid Evidence Assessments (REAs) and Systematic Reviews (SRs) - are becoming an increasingly important part of UNICEF's knowledge management and evidence translation efforts. Also, evidence synthesis (ES) products will ensure that: (1) policymaking and programming decisions are evidence-informed and that (2) evidence on 'what works, 'how' and 'why' is made easily accessible and understandable to UNICEF staff and strategic partners. Through collated bodies of existing evidence, time-pressed UNICEF staff will be able to gain new insights from the findings of multiple studies, rather than selected single studies, to support their work.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of the consultations is to systematically, objectively, and transparently document the key learning and knowledge currently available within the existing evidence base to help enable a clear and common understanding of evidence for programming excellence as well as identify the gaps. The intention is to focus on evidence and learning covering all the four strategic pillars zeroing in on specific prioritized issues. Moreover, all of these will help inform the national research agenda (and potentially, already inform policy and programming). The work should include an assessment of the quality of the evidence, as well as short summaries of, and links to, the relevant studies/reports, that will be turned into reader-friendly knowledge products for wider dissemination.

Under the guidance of the Chief, (REKM), the Consultant is responsible for the implementation of the activities specified below. For this analysis, we seek candidates with experience in conducting evidence synthesis products, such as Systematic Reviews, Evaluations, or production meta-analysis, and with an understanding of qualitative and quantitative methods, (including experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation). Specific expertise related to children, gender, and human/child rights will be regarded favourably.

SCOPE OF WORK/OBJECTIVES

This assignment will synthesise the 2019-2022 Malawi-UNICEF available evidence. The work will involve screening, quality appraisal, technical review and analysis, data extraction activities; report writing activities as necessary. Specifically, the responsibilities will include:

- **Scoping and protocol:** An initial review of the findings of bilateral consultations. This will take place ahead of the ES, to define the scope and methodology for the assignment. This stage may also entail a short desk-based scoping exercise, to determine the extent and nature of evidence including all evaluation and research work at MCO. This will help inform decisions on the thematic scope. The results of the consultations and desk-based scoping will form the basis of an ES conceptual framework (which may be based on the CP pillars (themes)), research question, and inclusion criteria. This information will be included in an ES protocol to prevent duplication of effort and to enable transparent peer review, working closely with key UNICEF staff.
- **Production of ‘Evidence Speaks’ - a final systematic and objective overview:** produced summarizing what is known about the distribution and quality/rigour of existing evidence from research. Short summaries, action required on recommendations and links to the relevant studies/reports should be included. This should be produced using rigorous and systematic methods consistent with current standards for literature searching, screening, quality appraisal and data extraction. containing a summary Brief describing the EGM’s key messages and state of the evidence base, an overview of the findings including strategic identification of key gaps in knowledge where there is a need to strengthen and/or scale-up evidence generation (new primary research) including proposed framing of suitable approaches, or additional evidence synthesis activities related to CP.
- **Support national research agenda –** provide consistent technical support to various aspects of development of national research agenda underway by the government of Malawi. Produce an initial version of the draft evidence map to support the national research agenda: which includes a descriptive analysis of the evidence gap map and provides recommendations for future research priorities.
- **Production of systematic reviews:** Throughout the contract period, the consultant will provide systematic reviews, analytical reports and technical insights based on various types of evidence being collected by the office. For each request of such review, accompanying analysis will provide an intuitive visual overview of the distribution of evidence (both on quality or lack thereof) on the effectiveness of interventions in key outcome areas AND draw conclusions from that learning to be used by the office in any short or long term programming support for embedding evidence in planning and monitoring and implementation of programmes.
- **Ensure** maximum coherence between interventions and key goals and results in the current CPD as well as identify gaps and support to solidify the basis for a stronger Research Agenda within UNICEF Malawi in the next CPD based on the work being achieved currently.

The key audience for the assignment is UNICEF’s REKM section in collaboration with programme sections and other key stakeholders (such as the National Planning Commission). It will provide an overview of evidence and gaps for all future research commissioned under the Malawi and UNICEF Research agendas. It will be made openly accessible on the UNICEF Malawi website.

Ethical considerations

The consultant should act with integrity and respect for all stakeholders in line with UNICEF’s updated [procedure](#) on ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis¹ to meet the minimum and binding standards for ethical evidence generation and analysis processes. The 5 guiding principles of **respect, beneficence, justice, integrity and accountability** will be used to ensure ethical safety during the data collection process:

¹ UNICEF PROCEDURE ON ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS (APRIL, 2021)

- protection of, and respect for, human and child rights within all research, evaluation and data collection processes undertaken or commissioned by UNICEF
- ensuring informed consent by all participants
- ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of subjects
- effective processes and accountability for ethical oversight of these processes

Throughout the process, the consultant should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders and do no harm. The consultant should identify any potential ethical issues and approaches in the Inception Report.

Data protection

All personal data should be accessible to the consultant, but no one else. The consultant needs to use secure systems (a) to ensure that no one else can access their data via the shared staff drives, and (b) to ensure secure data transfer between institutions. Cloud-based storage with limited sharing rights could be considered in this instance. Different personal data files need to be link-able, they need to be held separately so that they can only be linked purposely, by researchers who are authorised to do so. There is also a need to ensure that data cannot be removed from secure systems in ways that might compromise data security.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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

- The consultant will report to the Chief of Research, Evaluation and Knowledge Management (REKM) section. The consultant will provide an update on a bi-weekly basis (by email and/or Zoom as required) with regards to progress, challenges encountered, support required and proposed solutions.
- The contract supervisor will organize regular meetings with the consultant to assess progress guided by the agreed work plan and key deliverable deadlines.
- Additional QA support will be sought from the UNICEF ESAR office as necessary.

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

- Submission of all deliverables should be electronic and delivered to UNICEF Malawi in English: All draft and final reports and presentations, following UNICEF research and evaluation standards and [UNICEF style book](#).
- Payments will be processed only on satisfactory submission of deliverables.

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

- The consultant will consult via regular email, physical and virtual calls with the contract supervisor and the evaluation reference group.
- Timeline for deliverables as outlined in the expected deliverables table below. However, these may be adjusted depending on the recruitment speed and contextual factors in the country.

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

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

The key tasks and deliverables will be under the responsibility of the consultant who should manage the entire ES process in consultation with the contract supervisor, including the development of the conceptual and analytical framework and writing of an acceptable **quality and annexes**).

Deliverables	Timeline	Number of Working days	% of total fee payable
PHASE I - Inception phase:			
The inception phase will have the following sub-activities and deliverables:			Total for all activities for phase 1: 15% (All deliverables of this phase are interlinked and thus will be paid after the presentation to the Reference Group)
Initial inception meeting (Zoom/Skype) with UNICEF for UNICEF to present the themes and domains for the evidence mapping and agree on roles and responsibilities; and establish a mutual understanding of expectations.	Aug 2022	0.5	
Draft Study Protocol. Define the scope and methodology; additional scoping to define the extent and nature of the evidence base; drafting the EGM conceptual framework and inclusion/exclusion criteria in consultation with key UNICEF stakeholders.	Aug 2022	7	
Review of draft Study Protocol and incorporation of feedback from key stakeholders and evidence synthesis communities. Piloting and refinement of the search strategy.	Aug 2022	3	
Informal 'check in' presentation of initial scoping findings to the reference group of the National Research Agenda, with course corrections taken as necessary.	Aug 2022	0.5	
PHASE II			
Full systematic search to be undertaken to populate a draft Report including screening; critical appraisal including the risk of bias assessment and quality assessment; coding (data extraction) of relevant studies and narrative synthesis.	September 2022	12	Total for all activities for phase 2: 48% (All deliverables of this phase are interlinked and thus will be paid after the submission of final deliverable)
Support the production of a draft describing the key messages including the state of the evidence base; Production of a Draft Report containing an overview of the findings including strategic identification of key gaps in knowledge where there is a need to strengthen and/or scale-up evidence generation (new primary research) including proposed framing of suitable approaches, or additional evidence synthesis activities related to the country programme.	October	12	
Supporting the production of a final systematic and objective overview of a report 'evidence speaks' to summarize what is known about the distribution and effectiveness of existing evidence from research related to the CP. Short summaries of and links to the relevant studies/reports should be included within the EGM.	November	12	
PHASE III			
Providing technical and systematic reviews of types of evidence being produced by UNICEF in 2022.	December 2022	12	37% (All deliverables of phase III will be paid after the submission of final deliverable)
Final Report and Summary Brief report produced and signed off that presents the evidence to support UNICEF-Malawi's work on children organized according to themes/domains agreed in Phase I. This	January 2023	12	

should include an assessment of the quality of the evidence; and identification of the gaps in knowledge where there is a need to strengthen and/or scale-up evidence generation or evidence synthesis activities.			
Preparing detailed contents and supporting webinar presentation of the final report and EGM content to UNICEF and regional colleagues. (Note- a subsequent workshop may be held to discuss and reach a consensus on the scope and nature of the eventual research agenda, but this does not form part of the current ToR. Similarly, additional promotional opportunities may be identified for the presentation of findings, but this is also outside the scope of the current ToR.)	February 2023	4	

However, as the actual starting date may impact the dates estimated in the TOR, a detailed work plan with exact timeframes and actual delivery dates will be jointly agreed upon between the consultant and the supervisor upon contract signature.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR EVALUATION OF RESULTS

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

- Completion of tasks specified in TOR
- Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables
- Quality of work
- Demonstration of high standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF
- Annotated reference of credible data sources consulted.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

All payments, without exception, will be made upon certification from the supervisor of the contract, of the satisfactory and quality completion of deliverables and upon receipt of the respective and approved invoice. However, since the above deliverables are connected with each other and needed for each phase, therefore, the Consultant will be paid for all agreed deliverables for each phase as indicated above, upon submission of a progress report and confirmation from the supervisor of satisfactory quality and services rendered. All payments, without exception, will be made upon certification from the supervisor of the contract, of the satisfactory and quality completion of deliverables and upon receipt of the respective and approved invoice.

DESIRED COMPETENCIES, TECHNICAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum Qualifications required: <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Other Enter Disciplines: Social Sciences, Public Policy, Evidence Synthesis, Research Methods, Impact	Knowledge/Expertise/Skills required: Qualifications and/or specialized knowledge/experience required and desirable for undertaking the assignment This consultancy is open to individual consultants – throughout this document referred to as “The Consultant”.
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Evaluation or another technical field relevant to the work of UNICEF

As part of their application, applicants are asked to provide an up-to-date CV and cover letter outlining their previous experience in developing Evidence Gap Maps and/or other evidence synthesis products, conducting and/or reviewing Impact Evaluations and Systematic Reviews, and any experience and knowledge of child research, particularly relating to UNICEF-Malawi CP where applicable. A proposed daily fee rate should also be quoted in US\$.

Academic Requirements:

- Master's degree in the social sciences, public policy, evidence synthesis, research methods, impact evaluation or another technical field relevant to this consultancy

Professional Experience Requirements:

- 8-10 years of experience conducting evidence analysis work such as assessments, evaluations, synthesis, including Systematic Reviews or comparable products such as Rapid Evidence Assessments, Rapid Reviews, and Evidence Gap Maps. Experience with a range of synthesis approaches.
- Expertise in social research methods, including qualitative, quantitative experimental or quasi-experimental methods and study design
- Experience in the thematic or descriptive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.
- Demonstrable experience of working with UNICEF
- Demonstrable experience in planning, reviewing and evaluations of UN agencies or joint UN programmes
- Access to and experience of using quantitative, and qualitative analysis software.

Other Requirements:

- Demonstrated ability to organize own work, and work according to deadlines
- Ability to work collaboratively in a team environment with staff with differing experience and skills and with staff in different geographic locations
- A strong ability to manage, negotiate and collaborate with external and internal experts
- Demonstrated ability to set high standards for quality of work and consistently achieve project goals
- Solid writing, analytical, problem-solving, writing and presentation skills, particularly in the context of international work settings
- Fluency in English

Core Values and Competencies

Core Values: Commitment, Diversity and Inclusion, Integrity

Core Competencies: Communication, Working with People, Drive for Results

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the assignment, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to the performance and quality of work.

As per policy on consultants and individual contractors, 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. Prior to the issuance of the official contract, the consultant is requested to complete the applicable mandatory trainings.

CONDITIONS

- The consultancy will be on a long-term arrangement basis for over 06 months; however, the consultant will only work for 75 days during this contract period.
- 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 provide remote desk review services outside Malawi
- The consultant will be paid an all-inclusive fee (stationary, communication and other miscellaneous expenses) as per the stipulated deliverable and payment schedule.
- The consultant is not entitled to payment for overtime, weekends or public holidays, medical insurance, taxes, and any form of leave.
- 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.
- Consultants will not have supervisory responsibilities or authority on the UNICEF budget.
- The assignment is off-site support.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested consultants should provide the following:

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. Brief technical proposal (no longer than five pages) demonstrating the consultant's understanding of the assignment and approach/methodology to the assignment
3. Financial proposal including a breakdown of their all-inclusive fees (including professional fees, travel, living cost, visa and other costs). Complete the attached form.