

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)****Vientiane, Lao PDR****Individual Consultancy: Individual contract to coordinate the development and rollout of a breastfeeding counselling accreditation course****Terms of Reference****1. Background:**

Despite progress in recent years including a reduction in prevalence of stunted children under five years of age from 44 to 33 per cent, malnutrition remains a significant challenge in Lao PDR resulting in enormous human and economic costs including impairment of normal brain development, increased risk of disease and death, reduced learning outcomes, overall reduction in lifetime earnings and the stifling of economic growth including significant reduction in GDP.

The updated UNICEF Conceptual Framework of maternal and child malnutrition (2019) the importance of the co-occurrence of good diets, care and services for good nutrition outcomes across the life course. In Laos, diets of young children are unacceptably poor. According to data from LSIS-II 2017, throughout the early childhood, less than half of infants (44.9%) are exclusively breastfed in the first 6 months of life. Consumption of breastmilk substitutes is widespread from the first days of children's lives, especially, in urban settings where mothers are exposed to aggressive marketing of artificial formulas<sup>1 2</sup>. Pre-lacteal feeding, including, with rice water or pre-masticated rice, is common due to traditional beliefs<sup>3</sup> and 35% children aged 0-23 months are bottle-fed, including, 22% of those younger than 5 months of age; thus, posing formidable challenges to the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. Minimum dietary diversity is met for only one in three children aged 6-24 months and one in four for those aged 6-8 months.

Adequate and responsive caregiving including feeding is of particular importance to encouraging children's acceptance and formation of skills for optimal eating habits during the first years of life. It includes the process of observing and responding to children's feeding needs as well as positive stimulation to encourage acceptance of new foods, meals and habits related to the mealtime, both contributing to better nutrition outcomes and children's cognitive development<sup>4</sup>. Yet, services to support parent to provide adequate and responsive feeding and care for young children including infants remain limited in Lao PDR. In Lao PDR behaviour change campaigns and related efforts aim to raise not only awareness of appropriate infant feeding practices, but also the behaviours themselves. Also, efforts for the strengthening and enforcement of legislation to are taking place to limit the marketing and promotion of breastmilk substitutes and hence support the protection of breastfeeding. However, services to support mothers and caregivers facing challenges with infant feeding, particularly breastfeeding remain limited. While a package of national Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counselling materials are available, including materials for IYCF in the context of COVID-19, the overall capacities for interpersonal counselling at service provider level remain extremely limited.

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<sup>1</sup> Investigation into violations of the international code of marketing of breastmilk substitutes in Lao PDR: Excerpts from the report of Barennes H., et al. Submitted to UNICEF in May 2012

<sup>2</sup> Phouththkao, P, Otsuka K, Ito C, Sayamounghoun P, Kounnavong S, Jimba M. Cross-border Formula Milk Promotion in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Its Effect on Maternal Attitudes Towards Breastfeeding (2014) J Paediatr Child Health 50(1):51-6.

<sup>3</sup> USAID Nurture. A Literature Review: Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition and WASH Practices in Lao PDR. At [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00MJZ9.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00MJZ9.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> WHO, UNICEF, and the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health the Early Childhood Development Action Network. Nurturing care framework for early childhood development: A framework for helping children SURVIVE and THRIVE to TRANSFORM health and human potential. 2018

Hence it was decided to develop a national cadre of breastfeeding counsellors. As existing global lactation counselling courses and accreditations were not considered appropriate for the Lao context,<sup>5</sup> the Ministry of Health with the support from Save the Children and UNICEF developed a national curriculum which aims at establishing a core cadre of certified/accredited breastfeeding advisors for Lao PDR.

Therefore UNICEF, with the financial support of the EU Delegation to Lao PDR, are looking to recruit an individual consultant to support the Ministry of Health, particularly the Center for Nutrition under the Department of Health and Hygiene Promotion, with the finalization and roll out of this accreditation.

## **2. Purpose:**

The purpose of this assignment is to support the Ministry of Health coordinate and roll out the breastfeeding advisor (BFA) course.

## **3. Work Assignment:**

The consultant shall work closely with the Ministry of Health, specifically Center of Nutrition, to coordinate and assist the launch and implementation of the Breastfeeding Advisor (BFA) course including follow up to ensure that documentation and curriculum approval meet requirements and are properly handled in MOH systems; coordinate with selected trainers to ensure that assigned curriculum is finalized and validated prior to the teaching schedule; co-facilitate final trainer module preparation meeting and provide and support reference resources for course writing as needed; support in the recruitment and selection of target trainees based on the trainee criterion; coordinate with the selected hospitals for skill practice and facilitation of the final hospital practice plan; assist in the completion of the written exam and the practical exam – the Objective, Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE); as well as support any related BFA meeting as required.

More specifically, in consultation with the UNICEF Nutrition Team, the consultant team shall:

- Finalize course syllabus and create a teaching schedule including specific trainer assignments.
- Collect all teaching modules from the trainer, including teaching directions, and compile them into a teaching handbook.
- As needed, support CN and trainers by identifying technical references and learning resources such as training videos, references for medical best practice etc.
- Provide brief update of progress to date and next steps at weekly coordination meeting with the CN Training Unit.
- Work with the Nutrition Centre team to support and follow up on each lecture to ensure that it is delivered on a regular basis.
- Lead design of the 3 OSCE for course in Lao language based on WHO recommended competency assessments.
- In collaboration with CN and course trainers, finalize guideline for Part 3 of the course (hospital practice) to ensure there is a clear plan for monitoring and coaching clinical practice, documentation of learner progress and experience targets, and a guideline for weekly reviews and grading of assignments.
- Conduct the OSCE exam with support of CN and trainers at the end of each course part(section) and prepare report of learners' results.

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<sup>5</sup> These courses usually require the ability to prove that at least 1000 hours of breastfeeding counselling has been undertaken as well an exam, or alternatively a quite heavy theoretical course – see example here: [Which IBLCE Pathway is Right for Me? Certification FAQs – IBLCE](#)

- Work with the Nutrition Center team to monitor and facilitate hospital practice (course part 3)
- Convene meeting for course completion with CN to review learner results.
- Prepare biweekly report on the BFA course's progress, including the successful/barrier/next step for the biweekly course coordination meeting led by CN Training Unit
- Prepare final report for the BFA course.

The work should be undertaken in close consultation with the UNICEF Lao PDR Nutrition team and the Health and Nutrition team in Save the Children International Lao PDR office as well as the Centre for Nutrition.

#### **4. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required:**

- Medical doctor or similar qualification
- At least 10 years clinical experience supporting lactation
- Proven experience with clinical lactation support in the wider Lao health system
- Minimum 5 years proven experience as a medical trainer including experience with key relevant adult education and assessment techniques
- Familiar with global best practice in lactation and clinical care
- Excellent understanding of key OBGY/Pediatric/BF/EENC services and practices in Lao PDR
- In-depth understanding and knowledge of the government internal process and administrative procedures related to the launching the course training
- Strong interpersonal communication, persuasion, and training skills;
- Good organization skills including advocacy and dialoging skills with the government officials at decision making levels.
- Strong Lao language skills
- Excellent written and spoken English, an advantage

#### **5. Location:**

Consultant shall be based in Vientiane (Nutrition Centre or other location).

#### **6. Duration:**

The assignment is expected to be full time for 3.5 months from approximately 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

#### **7. Reporting Requirements:**

The consultant will be under contract to UNICEF Lao PDR and report to the Nutrition Manager with support from the wider health and nutrition team for administrative arrangements.

#### **8. Payment Schedule linked to deliverables:**

- Payment is against deliverables upon satisfactory completion of the activity and certified by the UNICEF Nutrition Manager
- A direct payment will be made to the service provider upon submission of invoices and related reports
- Payment will be made in USD within 30 days of submission of invoice as per UNICEF guideline.

<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Payment (including business travel fee) be directly linked with satisfactory deliverables</i>	<i>Reporting Requirements for each deliverable</i>
1. Finalization of the BFA course syllabus and schedule including trainer details and the finalization of the teaching handbook	30%	Final course syllabus with all required annexes reviewed by SCI/UNICEF and approved by MOH; Teaching handbook reviewed by SCI/UNICEF and approved by MOH
2. Finalize detailed guideline for Course Part 3 (Independent clinical rotations).	20%	Final Guideline by SCI/UNICEF and approved by MOH
3. Finalized OSCE exams for each course part (3 in total).	30%	Copies of OSCE exams of all participants
4. Final Report of the BFA course including learner scores, trainer feedback, and recommendations for the next course round.	20%	Final report for the BFA course

#### **9. Administrative Issues:**

- The total consultancy fee should include the technical support, return travel costs from the place of your recruitment to Vientiane, Lao PDR using the most economic and direct route based on the actual invoice submitted to UNICEF, DSA and other miscellaneous. The fee should be broken down by fee, living and return travel costs.
- UNICEF will cover directly the cost of translation and this should not be included in the proposed fee.
- The total consultancy fee should not include any in-country travel cost, which will be paid by UNICEF based on the actual needs.
- Final total fee will be confirmed based on the financial proposal submitted by the selected consultant
- The consultant is responsible for his/her own medical insurance and related expenses incurred during the assignment.
- The consultant is expected to use his/her own computer/laptop for the duration of the assignment.
- The copy rights of all the deliverables to be produced through this assignment will remain with UNICEF.

#### **10. Contract supervisor:**

The Consultant shall work under the general supervision of Nutrition Manager of UNICEF. The consultant is always expected to observe the highest standard of professional ethics and integrity, promote a results-oriented approach in the area of his/her responsibility and accountability and report irregularities to his/her supervisor.

#### **11. Nature of 'Penalty Clause' to be Stipulated in Contract:**

Unsatisfactory performance: In case of unsatisfactory performance the contract will be terminated by notification letter sent five (5) business days prior to the termination date in the case of contracts for a total period of less than two (2) months, and ten (10) business days prior to the termination date in the case of contracts for a longer period

Performance indicators: Consultants' performance will be evaluated against the following criteria: timeliness, quality, and relevance/feasibility of recommendations for UNICEF Lao PDR.

## 12. Submission of applications:

Interested candidates are kindly requested to apply and upload the following documents :

- Letter of Interest (cover letter)
- CV or Resume
- Performance evaluation reports or references of similar consultancy assignments (if available)
- Financial proposal: All-inclusive lump-sum cost including travel and accommodation cost for this assignment as per work assignment.

The deadline for applications is 5-Dec-2021

## 13. Assessment Criteria:

For evaluation and selection method, the Cumulative Analysis Method (weight combined score method) shall be used for this recruitment:

### a) Technical Qualification (max. 100 points) weight 70 %

- Degree/ Education in ..... (20 points)
  - Medical doctor or similar qualification
  - Strong interpersonal communication, persuasion, and training skills
- Knowledge of ..... (20 points)
  - Familiar with global best practice in lactation and clinical care
  - Excellent understanding of key OBGY/Pediatric/BF/EENC services and practices in Lao PDR
  - In-depth understanding and knowledge of the government internal process and administrative procedures related to the launching the course training
  - Strong Lao language skills
  - Excellent written and spoken English, an advantage
- Experience in..... (40 points)
  - at least 10 years clinical experience supporting lactation
  - Proven experience with clinical lactation support in the wider Lao health system
  - Minimum 5 years proven experience as a medical trainer including experience with key relevant adult education and assessment techniques
- Quality of past work (e.g. understanding, methodology) (20 points)
  - Assessment of previous work including good organization skills including advocacy and dialoging skills with the government officials at decision making levels
  - Reference checks

### b) Financial Proposal (max. 100 points) weight 30 %

- The maximum number of points shall be allotted to the lowest Financial Proposal that is opened /evaluated and compared among those technical qualified candidates who have attained a minimum 70 points score in the technical evaluation.
- Other Financial Proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price.

- The Contract shall be awarded to candidate obtaining the highest combined technical and financial scores, subject to the satisfactory result of the verification interview.
- Please note that all applicants should provide medical insurance covering medical evacuation for the whole duration of the assignment as part of the financial proposal submission.

**14. Programme Area, Outputs and Specific Key Results Areas in the Rolling Work Plan:**

Section Request: Health & Nutrition

Programme Area: **Output 4:** By 2021, strengthened multisectoral capacity and systems for scaling up nutrition interventions

IR:

Milestone: 4.1 Government at national and subnational level develop, implement and monitor evidence based multisectoral policies, plans and budgets for nutrition (improved enabling environment)

Included in approved AWP:  Yes  No