

UNICEF Moldova

Terms of Reference

Title:	Protecting children during pandemic COVID-19: A Technical Manual for Child Protection Specialists
Type of consultancy:	National Individual Consultancy
Duration:	40 working days
Timeframe:	September – December 2020
Travel:	The consultancy does not require travel

1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic represents one of the greatest challenges of the modern world. Globally, as of 7 August 2020, there were **14 529 009** confirmed cases of COVID-19, reported to WHO.¹ In the Republic of Moldova, on the same date, there were 26,628 confirmed reported cases, including over 1,400 children and adolescents aged 0 - 19.²

As health services become overwhelmed in caring for large numbers of infected patients requiring treatment, children and pregnant women face multiple difficulties in accessing standard care. Physical distancing and lockdown measures, restrictions of movement and border closures, and surveillance strategies are all affecting children in myriad ways.

The impact of the pandemic extends far beyond physical health. It produces profound effects on children's mental well-being, social development, safety, privacy, economic security, and more. While children are not the face of this pandemic, its broader impacts on children risk becoming irreversible and long lasting.³

Face-to-face child services – schooling, nutrition programmes, maternal and newborn care, immunization services, sexual and reproductive health services, HIV treatment, alternative care facilities, community-based child protection programmes, and case management for children requiring supplementary personalized care, particularly those living with disabilities, and victims of violence – have been partially or completely unavailable during the pandemic.

When it comes to violence, several factors related to confinement measures are likely to result in increased risk for children, including heightened tensions in the household, added stressors placed on caregivers, economic uncertainty, job loss or disruption to livelihoods, and social isolation. Children may also increasingly witness various forms of partner violence. During the crisis, identifying children at risk is inherently more challenging given that many adults who would typically recognize signs of abuse, such as teachers, childcare workers, coaches, extended family and community members and child and family welfare workers, are no longer in regular contact with children.⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic affects children in three main ways:

- (1) Through infection with the virus itself;
- (2) Through the social and economic impacts of measures, such as control, containment and mitigation, intended to reduce or stop transmission of the virus in various contexts; and

¹ <https://covid19.who.int/>

² <http://gismoldova.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/d274da857ed345efa66e1fbc959b021b>

³ https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/160420_Covid_Children_Policy_Brief.pdf

⁴ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/covid-19/>

(3) Through the potential longer-term effects of the crisis including economic downturn and a delay in progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵

The measures used to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 have led to disruptions to families, education, friendships, daily routines and wider community dynamics. These have had many harmful consequences for children's protection, well-being, and development. As countries move past confinement and quarantine measures, the socio-economic and political impact of these measures will continue. Reduced economic opportunities, loss of employment and income, disrupted societal and community level trust and cohesion, food insecurity, and other impacts including psychosocial distress will continue putting children's well-being and healthy development at risk.⁶

A rapid survey of the Territorial Social Assistance Units regarding the issues of families with children and children's rights protection professionals in the context of COVID-19 pandemic⁷ conducted in July 2020 by the CCF Moldova with UNICEF support contains relevant findings including that:

- COVID-19 pandemic has mainly affected families with children whose parents are substance abusers; families where at least one of the parents is known for being violent; families with low incomes; families with three or more children; and families where one of the parents lost his/her job;
- The most affected groups of children during the pandemic were street children; children left at home on their own because the parents/the only parent or carer was hospitalized with COVID-19; and children infected with COVID-19;
- The access of families with children to social services and benefits was affected by the change in the working hours of community social workers as well as Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments; by the impossibility to summon specialized meetings of e.g. multidisciplinary team, or gate-keeping committees; and by travel limitations which led to receiving and processing fewer applications and running fewer activities related to risk factor identification and to the assessments of families with children;

Recommendations refer, amongst others, to the following needs:

- Developing a methodological note on the application of the provisions relating to case management;
- Developing a methodological note on the implementation of Government Decision No 270/2014 on preventing, identifying and reporting on cases of violence, neglect, exploitation and traffic;
- Prioritising the family-type protection forms for children;
- Developing recommendations and guidelines on work in emergency for local and territorial guardianship authorities, community social workers, child protection specialists, specialists from residential institutions, as well as to various types of carers.

The expected outcome of the proposed assignment includes improving protection and service delivery for children by adapting the relevant processes and procedures used by child protection specialists by means of a comprehensive **Technical Manual** (hereinafter Manual).

2. Purpose of the assignment

The purpose of this consultancy is to improve access to quality protection and services to children by providing technical assistance to the Government of the Republic of Moldova in developing a comprehensive Note to be used by relevant local authorities, service providers, individual specialists and caregivers, in working with children during pandemic.

⁵ https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/160420_Covid_Children_Policy_Brief.pdf

⁶ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic, Version 2, May 2020

⁷ <https://ccfmoldova.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Raport-STAS.pdf>

3. Objectives of the consultancy

The objectives of this consultancy are:

- Conduct a desk research on national and international practices, guidelines, recommendations and other relevant materials regarding child protection in pandemic period;
- Map the specific child protection related areas of work affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of Moldova;
- Identify the main challenges and limitations faced by the different child protection professionals in the Republic of Moldova in implementing activities during the pandemic;
- Develop a comprehensive set of targeted guidance notes for key professionals on delivering assistance and services to families and children during pandemics;
- Ensure a unified approach to implementation of main cross-sectoral mechanisms and sectoral tools during pandemics.

4. Details of how the work should be delivered

The consultancy aims at supporting the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) in developing a Manual on protecting children during pandemic.

The Manual must contain, but is not limited by, the following elements:

- General context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of Moldova;
- Guidelines for mayors (as local guardianship authority);
- Guidelines for community social workers/child protection specialists at local level I;
- Guidelines for the management and child protection staff of the Social Assistance and Family Protection Department (SAFPD)/Municipal Department for the Protection of the Rights of the Child Chisinau (MDPRC);
- Guidelines for SAFPD/MDPRC child protection specialists within;
- Guidelines for SAFPD/MDPRC families with children at risk specialists;
- Guidelines for tutors/guardians, professional parental assistants, parents-educators;
- Guidelines for the staff of residential institutions and service providers;
- Adapted tools and procedures on working with children, as to be decided in consultation with MHLSP, local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders.

The process will be closely coordinated with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection and will be supported by UNICEF. A broad participation of civil society organizations, relevant central and local public administration representatives, partners, donors, families and children will be ensured.

The consultant will use a wide range of relevant national and international research findings and recommendations, evaluations and guiding notes, as well as best international practice

The consultancy is expected to be carried out within the period September– December 2020. The deliverables will be submitted to and validated by UNICEF and MHLSP no later than 15 December 2020.

To ensure an inclusive, informative and participatory analysis a cross-sectoral Working Group will be established, with representatives of Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, SAFPDs/MDPRC, civil society, children and youth councils, UNICEF and others, as required.

The exercise will be mostly focus on the social area of child rights protection, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable children, and will not include specific recommendations related to the education, health, justice or other sectors, except for cases which are in the interest of ensuring a unified cross-sectoral approach.

5. Deliverables and delivery dates

Tasks	Deliverable	Timeline*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct desk review of documentation, guidelines, recommendations developed as well as relevant practice at national and international level on working with children in pandemic - Develop a methodology of the proposed work - Provide a detailed outline of the Manual, - Draft questionnaires to be used with government officials at central and local levels, social assistants/child protection specialists, and families with children - Develop workplan, including list of interviewees, structure and location of focus groups and interview/FG discussions schedule 	Inception Report	8 working days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct relevant interviews and focus group discussions - Apply analytical methodology and tools to interviews and data - Draft initial Manual 	Draft 1 of the Manual	17 working days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop the detailed Manual, incl all required Guidelines and tools - Make adjustments to the Manual as per comments from UNICEF, MHLSP and other relevant stakeholders; supplement findings with additional analyses where necessary - Develop recommendations 	Draft 2 of the Manual	8 working days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate comments received from UNICEF, MHLSP and other relevant stakeholders and develop the detailed Manual (up to 50 pages) 	Draft final Manual	5 working days
Desk review of the final Manual, including an executive summary (one page max), general context, the guidelines and the tools	Final Manual	2 working days
Total:		40 working days

* Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.

6. Reporting requirements

The consultant will report to the Child Protection Specialist, who will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support so to achieve objectives of the consultancy, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to consultant's performance and quality of work.

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the consultant shall be discussed and planned in consultation with UNICEF. The consultant is expected to deliver each component of the workplan electronically (in Word format) and in Romanian and English. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Child Protection Specialist by email, with the Deputy Representative in copy.

7. 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 and counterparts.

8. Qualifications and experience

Specific requirements:

- Advanced University Degree in law, sociology, psychology, human rights, social work or other, closely related field;
- Proven experience in development of policies, administrative procedures, working protocols, standards, norms for service delivery;
- Demonstrated experience in working with central and local Government;
- Good networking and negotiation skills.

General requirements:

- Excellent command of English and Romanian, both oral and written;
- Working command of Russian is a strong asset;
- Experience in working with UNICEF or other UN Agencies will be an asset.

9. Content of technical proposal

- Relevant experience with similar type of assignments (max 300 words);
- Proposed approach and methodology (max 1500 words), including:
 - Timeline and milestones;
 - Risk and mitigation measures;
 - Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them;
 - Sample questionnaire: 2-3 interview questions per type of stakeholder.

Annex:

- Short Sample or links to related work previously conducted by the consultant;
- Curriculum Vitae.

10. Content of financial proposal

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify the consultancy fee, per day of work, requested for the tasks described in the Terms of Reference in USD. MDL will serve as contract currency, converted at the UN exchange rate applicable at contract signature date.

Other expenses directly related to the ToR assignments and deliverables such as: (translation/interpretation costs, local transportation etc.) may be included in the financial offer unless specified that UNICEF will cover them separately (see paragraph 14 and 15 below). If not provided by ToR, UNICEF will not reimburse costs not directly related to the assignment.

This contract does not allow payment of off-hours, medical insurance, taxes, and sick leave.

The final selection will be based on the principle of “best value for money” i.e. achieving desired outcome at lowest possible fee.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/output is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.

11. Evaluation criteria for selection

The candidate is expected to reflect in the submission the qualifications, knowledge and experience related to the requirements listed above. Technical evaluation will be performed through a desk review of applications, evaluation of technical proposals, and if necessary, may be supplemented by an interview.

The selection process is aimed at selecting the applicant who obtains the highest cumulative score (technical evaluation + financial offer evaluation points) following “best value for money” principle.

12. Payment schedule

The payment will be linked to the following deliverables upon satisfactory completion and acceptance by UNICEF:

Deliverable (delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)	Proportion of payment
Inception Report	30%
Draft 1 of the Note	30%
Final Note	40%

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs are incomplete, not delivered for failure to meet deadlines.

13. Definition of supervisory arrangements

The consultant will work under the oversight of Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of each task, as per the schedule outlined above.

14. Work location and official travel involved

The work will be home based, however the expert will conduct online interviews and consultations with the different government authorities, local authorities, child protection professionals, families and children, as per their availability. The consultant is expected to arrange and schedule such interviews. In the case restrictions due to pandemic are lifted, of-line interviews and consultations may be conducted. The UNICEF office will facilitate introductions to key informants.

15. Support provided by UNICEF

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the specialist and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support so to achieve objectives of the work, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to the performance and quality of work. UNICEF will provide an initial package of relevant documents and available research, and an initial list of relevant experts and counterparts to work with. UNICEF will also request relevant data – as agreed upon with the consultant – from relevant government counterparts.

16. Ethical considerations

The Contractor will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines⁸. The Contractor should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Contractor should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Assessment, as well as about the confidentiality of the

⁸ UNEG Guidelines <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/102>

information shared. The Contractor is allowed to use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

As per the DHR PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS, together with the Notification letter, the contractor will be sent the link on Agora containing UNICEF 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 acknowledgment. The selected candidate must complete the applicable mandatory online courses on UNICEF's learning platform prior to signature of contract. All certificates should be presented as part of the contract.