

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Vientiane, Lao PDR

International Individual Consultancy

TOR for Technical support to the implement the UNJP program on Social protection, Mother and Early Childhood Grant plus pilot in Lao PDR

Introduction:

The Government of Lao PDR recognizes the role of social protection in reducing poverty and inequalities and in promoting socioeconomic development and social cohesion. The National Social Protection Strategy 2025 (NSPS) provides guidance for implementing social protection policies in Lao PDR until 2025. Working to improve the conditions of the poor is as essential for the new NSPS as ensuring that those who have already achieved adequate income security will not fall back into poverty. The Government of Lao PDR is therefore committed to gradually aim for universal coverage in social protection, according to the available resources and the given socio-economic contexts. To that end, an Implementation Plan 2019-2025 (IP) for the NSPS has been drafted to develop the Strategy's activities into precise actions, assign them to a specific timeframe and responsible ministry and/or department and to identify potential partnerships.

Despite these recent developments, social protection sector in Lao PDR is at an extremely early stage of development. There is no experience of government-led social protection programmes providing regular cash transfers in Lao PDR yet. There have been a number of donor/NGO-led pilots that tested delivery of benefits through cash, such as the World Bank Community Nutrition Pilot Project, ADB's Basic Education for Girls Project, and DFAT's Resilient Livelihoods for the Poor project (using a 'Graduation' model for poverty alleviation in selected communities in Southern Laos). So far, there is no indication that these pilots have resulted in scaled-up programming using cash transfers.

In this context, a new UN Joint Programme (UNJP) titled "Leaving no one behind: Establishing the basis for social protection floors in Lao PDR" has been approved in October 2019. The UNJP is supported by the Joint SDG Fund and its main objective is to support the Government of Lao PDR in the implementation of the new NSPS, a roadmap for the development of the social protection system and the design and implementation of a Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG) as one of the main schemes included in the new Strategy.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) has requested the support of the UN and other partners to assess the feasibility of implementing such a social protection programme in Lao PDR. Through the new UNJP, UN partners will assist the Government to build a social protection system financed through blending public sector budget, ODA, private and non-traditional sources, to identify and test new channels for cash-transfers, resulting in a positive impact on women and children. The MECG component will act as a model for social protection provision, to be tested in preparation for scale up in the future.

In Lao PDR, making social protection more child-sensitive has the potential to benefit not only children, but also their families, their communities and national development. A child-sensitive social protection system can help mitigate the effects of poverty on families, strengthen families in their childcare role, and enhance access to basic services for the poorest and most marginalized.

Three participating UN organizations - ILO, UNICEF and UNCDF - will jointly implement the UNJP with UNICEF being responsible for designing and coordinating the delivery of the MECG, in line with

UNICEF's global social protection strategy and national child protection system strengthening efforts.

Objectives

The overall aim of the project is to support the Government in the implementation of the newly approved National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) and particularly the implementation of its Flagship Program – the Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG). The strategy sets out a roadmap for the development of a comprehensive social protection system in Lao PDR by setting new objectives and targets, including the prioritization of a the Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG) and related welfare services – that opens a unique window of opportunity and calls for reinforced support to the MoLSW to take forward the momentum.

By the end of the UN Joint programme, the main expected results are the following:

- (i) Government planning, managerial and implementation capacity (including leadership and co-ordination) to implement the NSPS is enhanced.
- (ii) At least 1,400 children under 12 months are benefiting from a new integrated package of welfare services, including the new MECG, early childhood wellbeing services and support for birth registration.

The direct beneficiaries of the interventions are the government and national partners involved in the implementation of the NSPS at central and sub-national level, and the pregnant women and children benefiting from the MECG Program who will be receiving the cash transfer and the integrated services package.

1. Purpose of the assignment

Under the general guidance of the Chief of Social Policy M&E section UNICEF is seeking for an expert on social protection design and implementation to be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Mother and Early Child Grants Project being funded by DFAT and UNJP programme on social protection. S/He will also be responsible for social policy programming and related advocacy, including planning, designing, and implementation. This includes programmes aimed at improving social protection coverage and impact on children and supporting the discussion on the transparency, adequacy, equity and efficiency of child-focused public investments and fiscal management especially on social protection and multidimensional child poverty. This encompasses both direct programme work with government and civil society partners as well as linkages and support to teams working on education, health and nutrition, child protection and water and sanitation.

2. Work Assignments:

Strengthening social protection (MECG) coverage and impact for children

Supports the development of social protection policies, legislation, and programs with attention to increasing coverage of and impact on children, with special attention on the most marginalized. Identify, generate, and present evidence to support the objective of the MECG and social protection in Lao PDR in collaboration with partners.

Promote and strengthen an integrated social protection system, while providing technical support to partners to improve the design of cash transfers and child grants in the country. Improve linkages with other social protection interventions such as health insurance, public works, and social care services as well as complimentary services and interventions related to nutrition, health and nutrition, education, and child protection.

Undertake and improve monitoring and research around social protection impact on child outcomes and the use of data and research findings for strengthening program results.

Support the identification of policy options for improved domestic financing of child-sensitive social protection interventions.

Improving the use of public financial resources for children

Supports budget analysis to inform UNICEF's advocacy and technical assistance to Ministries of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment, and social sector ministries to improve equitable allocations for social protection initiatives and essential services for children. Works with sector colleagues to build capacity to conduct the costing of intervention and cost-effectiveness analysis on priority interventions to help inform policy decisions on child-focused investments.

Builds the capacity of partners to improve the monitoring and tracking of public expenditure to support transparent, accountable, and efficient financial flows for essential service delivery, including social protection initiatives.

UNICEF Programme Management

Coordinate and provide technical support to government partners on social protection, especially on the MECC pilot's linkages reducing child poverty, improving human capital assets, and linkages with cross-sectoral social services. Liaise with section colleagues and sectors to ensure that the pilot achieves the result of improving nutrition, immunization, ANC, and PNC and birth registration objectives at the village level. Ensure that risk analysis and risk mitigation measures are embedded into the overall management of the pilot, in close consultation with UNICEF program sections, Cooperating Partners, and governments.

3. Expected tasks and deliverables

Planned deliverable	Estimated timeline
1. Detailed work plan for the duration of the assignment	2 weeks
2. Coordinate the remote capacity building plan for the teams to implement the pilot at the provincial and district and village level and development of training materials.	Capacity building for the implementation of the pilot and the training materials/guidance (during entire assignment depend on the needs) (throughout the 8 months)
3. Together with the M&E Specialist conduct a baseline of the MECC pilot	First two months of the assignment
4. With the support of the design institute and the M&E specialist operationalise the M&E system, Grievance redress mechanisms and the MIS system	Within first 4 months for set of the systems and continue to collect and analyse data throughout the assignment
5. With the support of the UNICEF IT officer and Social policy specialist support the smooth running of the MIS system for the MECC.	Throughout the period of the assignment.
6. Support the articulation and supervision of identified assessment and researches including base line study.	Throughout the period of the assignment.
7. Monthly activity reports with detailed recommendations and way forward.	Every month
8. Detailed quarterly reports showing among others the process, activity results, challenges, weakness, and recommendations	Every quarter
9. Coordinate inputs into the quarterly and annual donor report, with focus on the process, activity results, challenges, weakness, and recommendations by the end of contract	End of contract
10. Participate and provide technical inputs during the Technical working group meetings, preparation of materials and update with support of the National Social Protection Specialist.	Throughout the period of the consultancy as may arise
11. Supports budget analysis to inform UNICEF's advocacy and technical assistance to Ministries of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment and social sector ministries to improve equitable allocations for social protection initiatives to help inform policy decisions on child-focused investments.	Throughout the period of the consultancy as may arise

12. Together with the Evaluation Specialist support the kick start of the UNJP end line Mix method evaluation	Sep 2021 – March 2022
13. Contribute to the development of 9 human-interest stories for the MECG pilot.	Throughout the consultancy.

4. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required:

Education

- Advanced University Degree in economics, Social Policy (planning, economics, social sciences, public policy and/or international development policy) or related field.

Experience

- A minimum of 8 years of relevant professional work experience in designing, implement and monitoring of social protection initiatives is required and experience in social service integrated child grants program is an asset.
- Good understanding of monitoring and evaluation of social protection initiatives.
- Excellent organizational and workshop skills, attention to detail and ability to contribute in an open team environment.
- Familiarity and prior experience with the UN system, or with the international development/ humanitarian/ emergency community highly desirable.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English is required.
- Ability to work independently and respond to feedback in a timely and professional manner.

Location:

Vientiane Capital, and Pilot Province and District Lao PDR (Sanamxay and Phouvong in Attapeu, Nong in Savannakhet)

5. Duration:

The assignment will be undertaken between 1 August 2021 to 31 March 2022 for 8 months.

6. Reporting Requirements:

The consultant is expected to make quality and timely contributions to the quarterly and Annual joint SDG and DFAT donor report using the template provided by the Donors, monthly and baseline report of the programme.

7. Payment Schedule linked to deliverables:

Payments will be made on a monthly based on agreed deliverables with the consultant via bank transfer after the provision of monthly report to be accepted by UNICEF.

** The fees shall be calculated based on the days estimated to complete the assignment in the Terms of Reference and shall be considered the maximum compensation as part of a lump sum contract and agreed on a work plan for submission of deliverables. No additional fees shall be paid to complete the assignment. Payment will be made upon delivery of all final products and full and satisfactory completion of the assignment.*

Administrative Issues:

The assignment requires taking several missions to the pilot province, district, and villages in the implementation of the program. UNICEF shall provide transport for the sub national missions. The consultant is expected to use his or her own laptop computer. Health insurance is required by the consultant. The copy rights of all the deliverables to be produced through this assignment will remain with UNICEF.

8. Contract supervisor:

The consultancy is under the supervision of the Chief of Policy Monitoring and Evaluation. The Social Protection Specialist will provide day to day support.

9. 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.

10. Submission of applications:

Interested candidates are kindly submit the following document:

- 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 **10 August 2021**

11. Assessment Criteria:

A two-stage procedure shall be utilized in evaluating proposals, with evaluation of the technical proposal being completed prior to any price proposal being compared.

Applications shall therefore contain the following required documentation:

1. Technical Proposal, including a cover letter, updated CV,
2. Financial Proposal: Lump-sum offer with the cost breakdown: Consultancy fee, travel costs (economy class), per-diem to cover lodging, meals, and any other cost related to the consultant's stay in Vientiane, including transportation inside the city and other costs. The travel (if involved) shall be based on the most direct and economy fare.

No financial information should be contained in the technical proposal.

Assessment Criteria for Consultant

I) Technical Qualification (max. 100 points) weight 70 %

Education Degree will have a maximum of (30 points)

- Advanced University Degree in economics, Social Policy (planning, economics, social sciences, public policy and/or international development policy) or related field.

Knowledge of the below will have a maximum of 20 points

- Good knowledge of designing implement and monitoring social protection initiatives including its linkages to child poverty.

Experience in the below will have a maximum of 30 points

- A minimum of 8 years of relevant professional work experience in designing, implement and monitoring of social protection initiatives is required and
- Experience working on social service integrated child grants program is an asset.
- Excellent organizational and workshop skills, attention to detail and ability to contribute in an open team environment.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English is required.

Ability to work independently and respond to feedback in a timely and professional manner
Quality of past work (e.g. understanding, methodology) in the below will have a maximum of 20 points

- Advance skills on management government partners and community level stakeholders

- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English are required
- Ability to work independently and respond to feedback in a timely and professional manner

II) Financial Proposal 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.