**UNICEF Moldova**

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

**National Individual Consultancy**

**Social Assistance to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection**

**Location:** Outposted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

**Duration and timeline:** October 2022 – October 2023 (Full time – 21.75 working days per month; 11.5 months)

1. Background

In late February 2022 in the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova) an emergency response was launched following an intensive flow of refugees from Ukraine caused by the conflict. As of 17 May 2022, over 461,480refugees arrived from Ukraine through official border crossing points with Ukraine with over89,948 remaining in the country.

Prior to the beginning of the conflict, Moldova was already facing significant challenges. More than a quarter of the usual resident population of 2.5 million is in absolute poverty, there is continued emigration of the labor force and a shadow economy of more than 30% of the GDP, largely due to undeclared labor. The situation is exacerbated by increasing energy price hikes and inflation, which accelerated to an all-time high of 27% in April 2022. The agricultural sector, which accounts for 15% of GDP and 30% of employment, has experienced significant shocks with high input prices, limited yield due to drought and shocks to markets and value chains.

Should scenarios of an additional influx of refugees materialize and inflation persist, it is estimated that some 250,000 to 500,000 Moldovans may fall below the poverty line over the next months. Of particular concern are the tens of thousands of people estimated to be facing food and nutrition insecurity, especially families with 3 or more children, pregnant women, people with disabilities and single-parent households – particularly in rural areas – which comprise most of the lowest income quintile of the population with the least resilience and coping mechanisms the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (hereafter MLSP) has been playing a leading role in ensuring an adequate response to the refugee crisis and its secondary socio-economic impacts on vulnerable Moldovans. Concurrently, the Ministry has embarked on an extensive social protection reform to strengthen systems and programmes, and their scalability to shocks and other stressors including further waves of forced displacement. Reviews of the Moldovan social protection system have highlighted constraints concerning the low coverage of cash transfer programmes, such as the means-tested anti-poverty programme Ajutor Social and the cold-season benefit APRA, inadequacy of benefits and provision of services, including labour market interventions. Other challenges pertain to the lack of integrated management information systems, capacity and human resources, which hamper the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of social protection support.

In this context, it is incumbent on humanitarian and development actors who are supporting the government-led response to poverty to meet the crisis needs driven by the Ukraine conflict, doing so in a way that contributes to the government’s objectives for improving the shock responsiveness and inclusiveness of the social protection system. This encompasses lowering legal and *de facto* access barriers for marginalized groups, including refugees to allow access to national programmes in line with nationals. Such an approach is expected to generate both immediate and longer- term benefits for the government social protection system.

1. Purpose of the individual consultancy

The purpose of this consultancy is to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to respond to the refugee crisis and to strengthen national social protection system, in line with the provisions of adopted policy documents.

1. Objectives of the consultancy

Providing MLSP assistance in strengthening the Program *Ajutor Social* for vulnerable Moldovans, including families with children, refugee families, and host communities. Support to other social protection schemes may be considered as needed.

Specific tasks include:

* Draft normative acts, collect and analyze relevant data and organize consultations;
* Finalize draft normative acts based on relevant proposals and opinions from MLSP sectors, the line ministries, civil society and/or other stakeholders
* Analysis of management systems and the delivery chain of the *Program Ajutor Social* and formulation of proposals to strengthen these to ensure improved coverage of targeted and inclusive social assistance for vulnerable people, including refugees;
* Planning activities in coordination with the MLSP, based on the analysis and in accordance with priority directions (defined in partnership between the MLSP and international partners);
* Provide recommendations for strengthening the shock-responsive capacities of MLSP, to respond to future crises (displacement or other)
* Coordinate information-sharing on activities, progress, technical materials, and other communication, including refugee-related ones, between the MLSP and UN partner agencies
* Lead the Steering Committee by coordinating all stakeholders implementing complementary activities on Social Protection (e.g. UN agencies, World Bank, IFRC, etc.)
* Assist senior stakeholders of government identify and analyze policy problems and provide - or mobilize - support and technical expertise from the Steering Committee members for the design and delivery of suitable solutions

1. Deliverables and Delivery dates

Based on detailed monthly work-plans agreed with the supervisor, specifying activities to be realized and documents/deliverables to be produced, a consultant will submit monthly reports with an overview of completed tasks and outputs attached.

All the tasks are to be performed continuously throughout the engagement, with indicative deadlines for specific outputs as included below:

| No. | Tasks | Deliverables  (All deliverables should be in English and Romanian languages) | Timeline\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Familiarize with the documents, reports and studies, relevant time-series data where applicable | Detailed Work Plan with timeline, key deliverables, delivery dates | Week 1 |
| 2. | Analysis of the normative framework | Analysis of the normative acts is finalized. | Week 2 |
| 3. | Consultations with MLSP and UN Partners (UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR) on the activities and the implementation of the defined workplan | At least bi-monthly consultation meetings organized and held with MLSP and UN partners | Continuously throughout the engagement and on monthly basis (throughout week 19) |
| 5. | Technical support provided to MLSP jointly determined with UN partners | Development and presentation of monthly reports based on Monthly agreed activity plans (jointly with MLSP and UN partners) | Continuously throughout the engagement and on monthly basis (throughout week 19) |
| 6. | Elaboration and compilation of the individual consultancy report as well as a presentation of the report findings for a high-level policy advocacy meeting with MHLSP, Ministry of Finance and UNICEF. | Final Report with the Annexes and endorsed by the MHLSP, and one presentation to stakeholders and UNICEF. This final report will also include a one-page executive summary in Romanian, English, and Russian. | Week 19 |
| 8. | **Final timeline for the contract** | **No later than 30 November 2023** |

\* Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.

1. Reporting requirements

The consultant will report to UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. UNICEF, in close coordination with WFP and UNHCR, will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support to achieve the 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 advance and in consultation with MLSP, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR.

The consultant is expected to deliver monthly reports (in Word format) in English and Romanian.

1. Performance indicators for evaluation of results

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

* Completion of tasks specified in ToR and detailed activities in monthly work-plans;
* Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables;
* Quality of work;
* Demonstration of high standards in cooperation and communication with counterparts.

1. Qualifications and Experience

The competences required for the consultant are the following:

* Advanced academic degree in political science, public policy, social policy, economics, law or other relevant studies;
* A minimum of 5 years of professional experience in the field of social assistance
* Excellent knowledge on international social assistance standards and national policy and regulatory framework, including on how these work in emergencies;
* Excellent knowledge on the Moldovan national social assistance system, services and stakeholders;
* Excellent communication and facilitation skills;
* Fluency in Romanian and working knowledge of English is required;
* Knowledge of refugee and forced displacement issues is considered an advantage.

1. Content of technical proposal

The Technical Proposal should include but not limited to the following:

* Detailed description of the methodology and technical approach;
* Tentative work plan with timeframe and deadlines for deliverables;
* Project dependencies, risks and assumptions, as well as proposed relevant mitigation measures;
* Project implementation plan showing the detailed sequence and timeline for each activity and days necessary for each proposed team member;
* Quality assurance mechanism and risk mitigation measures put in place.

1. Financial Proposal

The financial proposal shall indicate total budget estimated in MDL, as well as a detailed breakdown of budget items. Payments will be based on a monthly basis based on monthly reports, previously approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and UN involved agencies i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR.

If not provided by ToR, UNICEF will not reimburse additional costs not directly related to the assignment outcome, such as translation/interpretation services, local travels, passport/visa costs, hardware, software, stationery, logistic and meeting costs.

1. Evaluation criteria

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 total amount of points to be allocated for the price component is 30. The maximum number of points (30) will be allotted to the lowest price proposal of a technically qualified offer. Points for other offers will be calculated as Points (x) = (lowest offer/ offer x) \* 30.

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

1. Payment schedule

The payment will be done on a monthly basis based on monthly reports and attached outputs and upon satisfactory completion and clearance by MLSP, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR.

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.

1. Definition of supervision arrangements

The consultant will work under the oversight of the head of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Social Policy Specialist of UNICEF Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of tasks, as per the monthly schedule outlined above.

1. Work location and official travel involved

**Location:** The consultant will work within MLPS with the team of the department of social assistance. The Individual Consultant will have to make themselves available online with their own computer with access to internet. UN partner agencies will not cover any costs incurred by the contractor for setting-up and maintaining a working space outside, in order to perform the tasks of this TOR.

**PTO:** The Individual Contractor will be entitled to Paid Time Off (PTO) credit at the rate of one-half days (1.5 days) for each full month of service, to be credited on the last calendar day of the month.

**Travel:** The work will require local travels in order to conduct in-person meetings, consultations and field-monitoring. MLSP will facilitate introductions to key stakeholders.

1. Support provided by UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR

UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR will regularly communicate with the consultant 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, WFP and UNHCR will provide an initial package of relevant documents, and an initial list of relevant stakeholders and counterparts to work with.

1. Ethical considerations

As per the DHR PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS, together with the Notification letter, the contractor will be sent the link on UNICEF’s learning platform, 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.

1. Other considerations

Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

The selected candidate is solely responsible to ensure that the visa (if applicable) and health insurance required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract.

Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully-vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.

UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.