

**UNICEF Lao PDR  
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SERVICES CONTRACT**

**Title:** National Consultant  
**Requesting Section:** Communication  
**Proposed level:** NOB  
**Duration:** 6 months  
**Start and end dates:** 17 September – 16 March  
**Duty Station:** Vientiane  
**Supervisor:** Maria Fernandez

**Related Country Programme Outcome/Output:**

**Outcome 5.** By 2021, national policy environment and systems are improved for disadvantaged children, guided by knowledge and data.

Output 2: Communication for Development (C4D). By the end of 2021, social norms and behaviours related to child survival, development and protection are improved through effectively coordinated C4D initiatives, technical oversight and institutional capacity building.

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**1. Purpose of Assignment:**

The first years of a child's life form the foundations for future development.<sup>1</sup> With as many as 1,000 new neural connections being made every second, these early years, if nurtured, have the potential to enhance a child's development, and buffer against external risk factors, setting him or her in good stead for a productive and healthy life.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately however, an estimated 43% of children under the age of 5 years in low and middle income countries do not achieve their full potential due to risks of poverty, inadequate nutrition, lack of access to basic services and limited or no enriching opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

Inevitably, parents and caregivers, play a critical role in their children's early development, and their behaviours have the power to either enhance or hinder their children's future development and potential. Supporting parents to understand the importance of the early years and to commit to adopting behaviours that nurture a child's development is essential if we want to see future generations fulfilling their potential.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2014) Building Better Brains: New Frontiers in Early Childhood Development. <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/Building-better-brains-EN.PDF>

<sup>2</sup> Lori G. Irwin, 'Early Childhood Development: A Powerful Equalizer', World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Development of Health, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Maureen M. Black, et al. (2016), 'Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course', *The Lancet*, series 0140-6736, no. 16, 4 October 2016, p. 2. [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)31389-7.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(16)31389-7.pdf).

To this end, UNICEF Laos, is developing a comprehensive parenting package that will engage parents and provide them with knowledge, skills and commitment to perform protective and nurturing early childhood development (ECD) behaviours in all five domains of childcare, namely: health, nutrition, responsive care-giving, security and safety, and early learning

## 2. Objective

The overall goal of the consultancy is to support the development of the parenting package. This will include: contributing to create a managerial structure which will include Government counterparts and development partners, liaising with mass organisations, getting buy in from different partners, providing inputs for the development of the communication materials and supporting the pre-testing of materials, contributing to create a dissemination strategy, organizing workshops with partners, getting approvals and support the implementation of the package.

## 3. Background/Rationale

While Laos has made significant advances in health and social outcomes for children over the past decade, challenges still exist. Twenty-seven percent of children under the age of 5 years are underweight, and 36% are stunted.<sup>4</sup> Child mortality remains high at 88 deaths per 1,000 live births, and immunization coverage remains low.<sup>5</sup> Over three quarters of children aged 2 to 14 years are subject to at least one form of psychological or physical aggression from an adult in their household,<sup>6</sup> and almost 40% of the population has no sanitation facilities.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, aggregate data hide substantial geographical, gender, social and ethnic disparities. Children from rural areas, girls and children from non-Lao-Thai ethnic groups in fact, continue to fare more poorly than other children across health, nutrition, education and protection indicators, and social exclusion is an ongoing barrier for children and families affected by disability.<sup>8,9</sup>

Taking stock of these realities, and recognizing the impact that parent's and caregivers can have on the first years of their children's lives and their future cognitive, social and emotional development, UNICEF Laos has committed to working with the Lao Women Union and other Government counterparts and development partners to develop and deliver a parenting package that empowers and motivates parents to adopt healthy behaviours that contribute to their children's optimal ECD.

To be successful, the package needs to respond to the beneficiaries' needs, be comprised of content that is mutually reinforcing, and be framed in a way that inspires and motivates parents to act. While the parenting package materials will be developed by a communication agency, the parenting package is more than a set of products. For the package to be successful it will require buy in from Government and partners for which a managerial structure will have to be created

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<sup>4</sup> Lao <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR268/FR268.pdfChild> Anthropometric Assessment Survey (2015)

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF (2013) Laos PDR Country Kit: Health

<sup>6</sup> Lao Social Indicator Survey, *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Lao Social indicator Survey, *op. cit*

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF (2017) Violence Against Children Survey in Lao PDR. Full Report (not for circulation yet)

with the support of the consultant. Government and development partners' participation throughout the different phases of the development is crucial to bring the project at scale in a participatory manner, and to ensure a right approach for the piloting and implementation phases.

#### **4. Scope of Work/ Work Assignments**

The following tasks are expected from the selected consultant:

- Review all documents provided by UNICEF Laos relating to ECD in the areas of health, nutrition, WASH, child protection, education and disability.
- Review the needs assessment carry out by UNICEF.
- Prepare a detailed work plan.
- Support the Communication team and liaise with the communication agency as required.
- Present the project to key Government partners, including mass organizations, and development partners.
- Work hand-in-hand with the Government and UNICEF to set up a managerial structure to oversee the development and implementation of the Parenting Package.
- Inform partners and UNICEF colleagues (programmes) on the progress of the project on regular basis.
- Get approvals on key messages, branding, communication products, strategies, ToT, etc.
- Organize workshops and meetings to get inputs on branding, communication materials, Training of trainers and dissemination strategy.
- Support the pre-testing of the communication materials.
- Participate in the development of the dissemination strategy.
- Support the pilot phase.
- Document lessons learned and prepare for the actual implementation of the package in key provinces.
- Prepare for the implementation of the PP in key provinces and liaise with UNICEF programmes as required.
- Communicate with partners on regular basis.

#### **5. Duration:**

6 months, from 17 September to 16 March.

#### **6. Deliverables:**

Deliverables	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed work plan considering recommendations from the needs assessment carried out by UNICEF, key background documents provided by UNICEF, and the work plan submitted by the communication agency working on the communication materials for the Parenting Package.</li> <li>• Inputs provided to the communication agency on the work plan and branding/messaging ideas.</li> <li>• Presentation on the project, milestones, timelines, managerial structure for Government and development partners developed.</li> <li>• At least one coordination meeting with Government organized.</li> </ul>	By 30 Sept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on the project to key Government partners, including mass organizations, and development partners delivered.</li> <li>• Managerial structure to oversee the development and implementation of the Parenting Package set up.</li> <li>• Inputs provided to the communication agency as required.</li> <li>• At least 2 coordination meeting with partners organized to follow up on the project and get feedback.</li> <li>• Support to get approvals on key messages, branding communication products provided.</li> <li>• One workshop on branding and messaging organized in collaboration with Government counterparts organized.</li> <li>• Support to do the pre-testing of the communication materials provided.</li> </ul>	31 Oct
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inputs provided to the communication agency as required.</li> <li>• At least 3 coordination meetings organized.</li> <li>• 2 updates on the progress of the parenting package shared with key partners.</li> <li>• Support to get approvals on key messages, branding communication products provided.</li> <li>• Support to do the pre-testing of the communication materials provided.</li> </ul>	30 Nov

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial draft of the dissemination strategy available with inputs from the consultant submitted.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inputs provided to the communication agency as required.</li> <li>At least 3 coordination meetings organized.</li> <li>2 updates on the progress of the parenting package shared with key partners.</li> <li>Support to get approvals on key messages, branding communication products provided.</li> <li>Support to do the pre-testing of the communication materials provided and/or to produce the report summarizing key findings submitted.</li> <li>Final draft of the dissemination strategy available with inputs from the consultant.</li> <li>Draft plan for the ToT shared.</li> </ul>	31 Dec
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inputs provided to the communication agency as required.</li> <li>At least 3 coordination meetings organized.</li> <li>2 updates on the progress of the parenting package shared with key partners.</li> <li>Support to get approvals on key messages, branding communication products provided.</li> <li>Dissemination strategy available with inputs from the consultant and presented to key counterparts.</li> <li>Plan for the TOT finalized and workshop organized.</li> <li>Draft plan for the pilot phase developed.</li> </ul>	31 Jan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inputs provided to the communication agency as required.</li> <li>At least 3 coordination meetings organized.</li> <li>2 updates on the progress of the parenting package shared with key partners.</li> <li>Support to get approvals on key messages, branding communication products provided.</li> <li>Dissemination strategy updated as required.</li> <li>Plan for the pilot phase finalized.</li> <li>Document summarizing key lessons learned from the pre-testing submitted.</li> </ul>	28 Feb

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inputs provided to the communication agency as required.</li> <li>• At least 3 coordination meetings organized.</li> <li>• 2 updates on the progress of the parenting package shared with key partners.</li> <li>• Support to get approvals on key messages, branding communication products provided.</li> <li>• Dissemination strategy updated as required.</li> <li>• Plan for the pilot phase updated with inputs from partners.</li> </ul>	16 March
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#### 7. Reporting requirements:

The consultant will report to the Chief of Communications in the Lao PDR Country office.

#### 8. Education, Qualifications and Experience Required

- University degree in the areas of communication for development, communication, behaviour change communication, sociology, anthropology, public health, international relations, education or other related social sciences.
- At least 3 years' professional experience in the development context.
- Knowledge of behaviour change and social norm change processes.
- Ability to communicate in English.
- Experience of working in one or more areas of early childhood development is an advantage.
- Strong interpersonal communication skills, ability to coordinate and synchronize work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds.