

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Vientiane, Lao PDR

Individual Consultancy: Individual contract to undertake a review of the multisectoral nutrition coordination function in all level

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.

This is acknowledged and addressed by the Government through a comprehensive policy and strategy framework that includes 1) the National Nutrition Policy of 2008, 2) the National Nutrition Strategy (2016-2025) and 3) the National Plan of Action 2016-2020. The framework applies a multisectoral approach, taking in nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive actions in health, education and agriculture. The sectors have agreed to address 22 key intervention for a common nutrition convergence approach. Owing to the serious nutrition situation and the high commitment of the Government of Lao PDR, development partners have in recent years provided substantial financial and technical support. This will continue in the foreseeable future, with the nutrition convergence approach being fully reflected in the plans and indicators of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPlan) 2021-2025.

To help lead and coordinate the multi-sectoral convergence approach, the Prime Minister's Office Decree 93/PM established a National Nutrition Committee (NNC) and Secretariat in July 2013. The NNC is mandated to lead and coordinate the 22 interventions of National Nutrition Strategy 2016-25 and National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) 2015-20, across relevant sectors and at all levels, and ensuring that the targets of the Action Plan are achieved. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Health serve, respectively, as Chair and Vice-Chair of the NNC.

To ensure that nutrition initiatives are planned, coordinated and monitored at local level, the Provincial and District Nutrition Committees (PNC and DNCs respectively) were established in all provinces and districts of the country. The committees are headed by provincial and district vice-governors with secretariats are headed by the director of the health department or office.

UNICEF is at the helm of facilitating ongoing discussions with internal and external partners around the current and best approaches for addressing Lao PDR's high rate of undernutrition. UNICEF is currently the lead development agency supporting the National Nutrition Committee, the National Nutrition Committee Secretariat and the Center for Nutrition for improved multisectoral nutrition coordination and implementation of nutrition specific actions. UNICEF is supporting the coordination for cross-sectoral interventions and the operationalization of the National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action for 2016-2025' by prioritizing evidence based, high impact interventions, as described in the Lancet Maternal and Child Nutrition Series (2008 and 2013), the State of Food and Agriculture – Food Systems for Better Nutrition (2013), and as advocated by the Global SUN movement. More specifically through funding from EU, the UNICEF has in 2017-2021 supported the NNC secretariat as well as PNC and DNCs in the 10 provinces of Bokeo, Luangnamtha, Pongsaly, Luangprabang, Houphanh, Xiengkhuang, Khammuane, Savanakheth, Saravan, and Attapeu, in

fulfilling their intended roles in coordinating the nutrition convergence approach at local level. Other development partners have, on a more limited scale, provided similar support in other provinces.

UNICEF with the financial support of the EU Delegation to Lao PDR are looking to support the Government of Lao PDR to conduct a review of the multisectoral nutrition coordination mechanisms at all levels, including the challenges and opportunities, particularly in the light that UNICEF's funding for multisectoral coordination is coming to an end in 2021 which includes financial and technical support for the central, provincial and district committees including facilitators.

2. Purpose:

The purpose of this assignment is to support government to review the current function of multisectoral nutrition coordination in each level including their ability to support the implementation of the nutrition convergent approach at sub-national level in Lao PDR; to identify challenges and opportunities, and provide recommendations for how multisectoral coordination can be strengthened across and between all levels, sectors and stakeholders. It also provides an opportunity for each sector to feedback on their accountabilities, and engagement toward achievement of multisectoral nutrition coordination mechanism.

3. Work Assignment:

The consultant shall document and analyze the National, Provincial and District Nutrition Committees' contribution to the implementation of the nutrition convergent approach including assess the capacity and relevance of the PNC and DNCs including whether the National Nutrition Committee (NNC), Provincial Nutrition Committees (PNCs) and District Nutrition Committees (DNCs) able to lead nutrition planning, budgeting, tracking and reporting in the Agriculture, Education and Health sectors at central and sub-national levels; assess the capacity of PNCs and DNCs to establish clear links between the NPAN and the Agricultural, Education and Health development plans and budgets at central and sub-national levels; assess whether the support to the PNC and DNC provided from Government and development partners including UNICEF was appropriate; analyze constraints and challenges more broadly; and identify opportunities for improvements and recommend potential options for future support by development partners.

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

- i. Prepare an inception report with a proposed work plan, methodology including study design and analytical framework and identified data sources
- ii. Conduct desk review of relevant information sources
- iii. Conduct stakeholder consultations at central and local level
- iv. Prepare and submit a draft report and present it
- v. Incorporate comments, prepare and submit a final report

The review should be based on reviews of existing document and on stakeholder consultations at national, province, district and village level. The document review should include the existing strategies, plans, progress reports, budgets and financial statements.

The stakeholder consultations should include key informants from government agencies, development partners, civil society organization concerned with nutrition convergence in Lao PDR. At local level, 3-4 provinces should be selected to represent the variety of conditions in Lao PDR following literature review and consultation with UNICEF, the NNC Secretariat and the EU Delegation. Criteria for sampling should ensure that capacities of different PNCs and DNCs and different development partner support are represented.

4. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required:

- Master's Degree or higher in nutrition, public health, or related fields such as public policy, international development, or similar.
- Minimum 10 years' experience in implementing projects in low-income countries, of which minimum 5 should be in implementing nutrition interventions encompassing nutrition-specific health interventions (including WASH), as well as nutrition-sensitive agriculture and education. Proven experience in nutrition programming at sub-national level in Laos, including practical interactions with provincial and district nutrition committees strongly preferred. Experience in working with remote rural communities in a multicultural setting in Lao PDR an advantage.
- Good understanding of coordination across sectors for planning, budgeting, implementation monitoring and more
- Proven experience with applied qualitative research methodologies in nutrition, public health, or related fields, including delivering technical and policy analyses
- Proven experience in training and/or leading a small research team on qualitative research a bonus
- Demonstrated experience working with international organizations preferred
- Strong analytical and communication skills with excellent written and spoken English
- Lao language skills, even if only at a conversational level, an advantage

5. Location:

Consultant shall be based in Vientiane (UNICEF office or other location) with meetings in the various relevant ministries/departments/center, development partners and with significant travel to the field.

6. Duration:

The assignment is expected to be full time for 3.5 months from approximately 1st Aug – 15th November 2021.

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 meetings and travel 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>

Prepare an inception report with a proposed work plan, methodology including study design and analytical framework and identified data sources	30%	Report with proposed work plan, methodology including study design and analytical framework and identified data sources
Conduct desk review of relevant information sources	10%	Report of desk review
Conduct stakeholder consultations at central, provincial and district level	30%	Draft a summary progress of assessment result
Prepare and submit a draft report and present it	20%	Draft report with PPT and present to the national level
Incorporate comments, prepare and submit a final report including executive summary	10%	Final report including accompanying PPT

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 in-country travel cost to the provinces for field-missions, 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 to:

<http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/>

- 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-July-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)
 - Master's Degree or higher in nutrition, public health, or related fields such as public policy, international development, or similar.
- Knowledge of (20 points)
 - Coordination across sectors for the planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring etc
 - Strong analytical and communication skills with excellent written and spoken English
 - Lao language skills, even if only at a conversational level, an advantage
- Experience in..... (40 points)
 - Minimum 10 years' experience in implementing projects in low-income countries, of which minimum 5 should be in implementing nutrition interventions encompassing nutrition-specific health interventions (including WASH), as well as nutrition-sensitive agriculture and education.
 - Proven experience in nutrition programming at sub-national level in Laos, including practical interactions with provincial and district nutrition committees strongly preferred.
 - Experience in working with remote rural communities in a multicultural setting in Lao PDR an advantage.
 - Proven experience with applied qualitative research methodologies in nutrition, public health, or related fields, including delivering technical and policy analyses
 - Proven experience in training and/or leading a small research team on qualitative research a bonus
 - Demonstrated experience working with international organizations preferred
- Quality of past work (e.g. understanding, methodology) (20 points)
 - Assessment of previous work including written and analytical skills
 - 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.