

TERMS OF REFERENCE

SHORT TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT

Climate Change and ECD; Development of technical guidance and action plan to operationalize Action Point 10 of the Pasifika Call to Action on early childhood development (ECD)

BACKGROUND

The foundation of the Pacific region's human capital is developed in the early years. However, early childhood development (ECD) indicators show young children are deprived of opportunities to develop to their full potential. Young children are the most vulnerable group in any community, considering their almost total reliance on adults to provide them with safe and nurturing environments and the critical nature of the early years in shaping lifelong trajectories. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by the destabilizing impacts of climate change, disasters and other environmental shocks. When young children are exposed to toxic stress and deprivation, they are more likely to struggle with cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties and experience delays in their development, which can have multi-dimensional and long-term impacts into adulthood. With their whole life ahead of them, any deprivation because of climate change at a young age can result in a lifetime of lost opportunity. Furthermore, if the needs of the youngest are not addressed with the right resources at the right time, this vulnerability extends to the whole community and into the future life of these individuals.

Across the Pacific, there are gaping problems in the provision of essential services to young children and their families. Composed of 14 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), the Pacific region is home to over a million children, about half of which are young children. Across these countries, legislation and policy on ECD have improved in recent years but these have yet to translate to equitable and resilient service delivery as they have traditionally been usually limited in scope or mandate and/or are not properly resourced for implementation. Delivery of services in some countries is fragmented among public agencies – scattered across education, health, finance, child and social protection and with poor coordination between central, local government and community partners. Services do not always converge for synergetic and coordinated support to the same young children and families, diffusing the impact of interventions and resulting in inefficiencies and waste of precious public resources.

Decades of research show that policies and programmes focused on ECD provide on the most cost-effective, comprehensive, immediate and enduring paths to boosting human development and building climate resilience and sustainable development. Positive experiences in the early years form a buffer to adversity and offer opportunities to develop coping skills critical for building resiliency. Multi-faceted ECD programmes – across early learning, WASH, child protection, health, nutrition and other sectors, as well as coordinated multi-sectoral programmes such as parenting programmes - offer a promising combination of interventions that build protective competencies essential for resilience. Young children can be resilient – and overcome adversity and threats to development - if they are in an environment which supports forming and using coping abilities, which are recognized as part of the Pacific. Parents, teachers, caregivers, and other significant adults around the child are critical as they are the main architects of these environments.

PICTs have been making notable developments in ECD. In February 2023, a Pacific Early Childhood Development Forum with the theme *Building a Resilient Blue Pacific Through Early Childhood Development*, was held in Nadi, Fiji. The conference brought together 15 PICTs, including Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Pacific Island governments also discussed advances made since the declaration of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD in 2017 – the region's nine-point action agenda that lays out critical national efforts to secure the optimal development of young children. Over three days of high-level forum, Pacific Island governments discussed early childhood investments as a critical component of building resilience to climate change, natural hazards and other emergencies.

At the 2023 Forum, government ministers, development partners, academia and other stakeholders, including from the sectors of education, finance, health and social welfare, formally endorsed the addition of Action Point 10 of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. This prioritises ECD as a pathway to increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities to the effects of climate change and other emergencies, and promote close collaboration between the areas of ECD and natural resources, environment and sustainable development to create a better future for children in the region.

As Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care Development (PRC4ECD), UNICEF is committed to supporting the development of technical guidance and action plan for Action Point 10 to define concrete and significant actions at Pacific regional-level,

as well as for an estimated 3 target countries (expected to be RMI, Fiji, Samoa) for national-level actions through a whole-of-government approach.

In addition to forming part of the expanded Pasifika Call to Action, this commitment is well in line with the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy and Pacific Culture Strategy, and Pacific regional sectoral commitments and priorities set by the Pacific Ministers of Education, Health, Women and others, and is expected to be informed by these, while also contributing back to the implementation of the same.

OBJECTIVE / SCOPE OF WORK

The purpose of this consultancy is to develop the technical guidance and action plan to support the implementation of Pasifika Call to Action Point #10 on ECD and climate change at both regional- and country-levels.

This is expected to include concrete actions and practical guidance for both PRC4ECD and individual Pacific Island Governments to advance ECD and climate change adaptation and resilience, and a monitoring framework to ensure that the implementation of the Action Point 10 can be assessed over time. This should align with the overall implementation guide and monitoring framework of the original 9-point Pasifika Call to Action, developed and disseminated to countries at the 2019 Pacific ECD Forum in Nadi.

A key recommendation from the 2023 Pacific ECD Forum is that the technical guidance note be concrete and practical so it can have meaningful impact in the countries. It should be guided by the strategic leadership of PRC4ECD and the outcomes document of the ECD Forum, be informed by the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy, the Pacific Culture Strategy, the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) and other relevant documents and draw on the engagement of key regional bodies such as PIFS, SPC and USP, as well as other regional/international organizations. It should be informed by and developed with the active engagement of Pacific Island governments, with participation within each engaged country across relevant government bodies, including those responsible for climate change and resilience, as well as those responsible for every other aspect of the Pasifika Call to Action to ensure a cross-cutting approach that embeds action for climate resilience across all sectors and aspects of young children's lives.

Under the auspices of PRC4ECD, it is expected that a taskforce will be formed to provide closer guidance to the work, with representatives of at least three Pacific Islands governments (including responsible for climate change, resilience and other aspect of the Pasifika Call to Action), in addition to key regional bodies such as PIFS, SPC and USP, and other regional/international organizations, with the composition to be endorsed by PRC4ECD. The consultant is expected to be guided by the taskforce, with technical oversight from UNICEF and associated partners such as PIFS.

In addition to the development of the regional plan and guidance, dedicated support to approximately three Pacific Island countries (expected to be RMI, Fiji, Samoa) is expected, not only to support similar relevant plans and guidance for those countries, but also to ensure that the resulting technical guidance and action plan is relevant and feasible for use at country-level, and reflective of the diversity across the Pacific. Engagement with these countries is expected to be well-informed, starting with a review of ECD and climate policies and plans, and relevant sectoral policies and plans that may inform ECD actions for climate change and resilience. In-country consultations are expected, and should include a review of any existing actions related to ECD linking to climate change and resilience, as well as key gaps and opportunities for action. It is expected that for the 3 countries where the consultant will have an in-depth engagement, they will also be available to provide technical assistance to the Governments to further develop priority actions and monitoring approaches for the implementation. Integrate and implement, monitor and report key priority actions from the respective country plans. The detailed scope of work for each country will be defined in collaboration with that country in the inception phase.

The process to develop the technical guidance and action plan should be highly participatory and consultative, and well-grounded in Pacific methodologies and frameworks. The consultant is expected to provide technical support and facilitation based on the latest evidence and experience on ECD and Climate Change, framing and positioning relevant actions and guidance in line with frameworks, priorities and commitments as set by PRC4ECD and other regional structures, as well as those for each of the relevant countries. The consultant is expected to design and facilitate consultations with all 15 countries with leadership from the taskforce, to ensure the regional guidance and plan are well-informed by evidence and voices from all countries.

The activities and deliverables are listed below, but the work may require parallel engagement on regional- and country-level guidance and plans to build in an iterative process that will ensure country-level guidance is in line with the regional framework, while also contributing to the development of the same.

ACTIVITIES, DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINES, PLUS PAYMENT SCHEDULE PER DELIVERABLE

ACTIVITY	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE	PAYMENT (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and review relevant documents, research, policies and plans, including but not limited to Pacific methodologies and frameworks, the outcome document of the ECD Forum, the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy, the Pacific Culture Strategy, the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), emergency response plans, data available on ECD and climate change, and other regional documents. Conduct a consultation process with the Taskforce and the 3 target countries to ensure the proposed methodologies and expectations align with the needs of the region and the involved countries. Draft an inception report outlining the scope of the work, activities, key stakeholders, methodology to be implemented and tentative timeline. 	Product 1 – Inception report		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft the technical guidance and action plan of the Pasifika Call to Action #10, identifying concrete actions, indicators to assess the implementation over time and practical guidance for both PRC4ECD and individual Pacific Island Governments to advance ECD and climate change and resilience. 	Product 2 – draft technical guidance (7-10 pages estimated) and action plan.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical support to Pacific countries to develop ECD and Climate Change priority actions (to be defined and agreed with the countries and UNICEF, but potentially including technical guidance and action plan, drawing on in-country workshops as relevant.) 	Product 3 – draft technical guidance and plan for each of 3 countries		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to a methodology agreed, socialize, improve and validate the relevant draft technical guidance and action plan to the Taskforce and all three countries. Consolidate the feedback and finalize the technical guidance and action plans. Coordinate and facilitate the dissemination of the final version of the technical guidance and action plan to government representatives of the Pacific Island countries. 	Product 4 – final technical guidance and action plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of the dissemination. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional partnerships, fora and workshops, and Pacific-Pacific collaboration 	Product 5 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective engagement in Pacific regional partnerships Effective Pacific-Pacific collaboration 		
			TOTAL

QUALIFICATIONS, SPECIALIZED EXPERIENCE AND ADDITIONAL COMPETENCIES

Bachelors Masters PhD Other

- A Masters degree in human and sustainable development, human rights, psychology, sociology, economics, international law, climate change and other social science fields is required. A PhD in one of the previous fields is an asset.
- A minimum of 15 years of professional experience in social development planning and management including early childhood development and climate change and/or other related areas at the international level.
- Experience designing and implementing participatory processes engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including government's.

- Work experience in climate, environment and disaster resilience building is required.
- Work experience serving in a developing country is required. Work experience in the Pacific Islands region is an asset.
- Experience working in UNICEF or a UN system agency is an asset.
- Proven ability to work independently under difficult conditions.
- Fluency in written and spoken English.

CONDITIONS OF WORK AND CLARIFICATION ON SUPERVISION

The consultant will work remotely ensuring availability to work at times suitable to the Pacific Islands region when required. All costs related to the work will be included in the financial proposal and subsequent contract. Daily monitoring and supervision will be provided by the ECD Specialist in collaboration, with the Climate and Environmental Specialist, though in-country day-to-day supervision would be by the relevant UNICEF staff in-country.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

- 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 (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.
- No contract may commence unless the contract is signed by both UNICEF and the consultant/ contractor.
- Consultant/Contractor will be required to complete mandatory online courses (e.g. Ethics, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Security) upon receipt of offer and before the signature of contract.

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

- Please submit a CV and brief technical proposal as well as a **separate financial offer** along with your application. The financial proposal should be a **lump sum amount for all the deliverables** and should show a break down for the following:
 - Monthly / Daily fees– based on the deliverables in the Terms of Reference above.
 - Travel (economy air ticket where applicable to take up assignment and field mission travel).
 - Living allowance where travel is required.
 - Miscellaneous- to cover visa, health insurance (including medical evacuation for international consultants), travel insurance, communications, and other costs.