

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

CALL FOR INSTITUTIONAL EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOI)

Reducing Stunting in Children under Five Years of Age: A Comprehensive Evaluation of UNICEF's Strategies and Programme Performance

Date of the EOI: 17 September 2015
Closing Date of the EOI: 1 October 2015
Email EOI to: evalofficeapplications@unicef.org

1 PURPOSE OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

UNICEF's Evaluation Office (EO) is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOI) from qualified institutions (consultancy firms, universities, etc.) for the provision of services to complete an independent evaluation of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance with regard to reducing stunting in children under five years of age.

2 BACKGROUND

Stunting in early childhood - known also as growth faltering - is a major child rights and global and national development concern given its link to child mortality, irreversible loss of cognitive development, and loss of productivity and national income. Despite the progress made in recent decades, an estimated 161 million children under five years of age (or one in four) were stunted in 2013. More than 90% of the children who experience stunted growth live in Africa and Asia (a vast majority in South Asia). In many countries where stunting prevalence has decreased, sustaining the gains and addressing disparities remain key concerns, as there are pockets of geographic areas, and socio-economic groups where stunting remains at high levels. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents a major opportunity for further mobilizing action globally. Target 2.2 states: "by 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons." This calls for an effective role for UNICEF both in terms of its advocacy and programme response as well as support for progress monitoring.

For many decades, UNICEF has assumed a lead role in advocacy and programme interventions for improving child nutrition both in emergency and development contexts. Key strategic shifts in UNICEF were the 1990 Nutrition Strategy and the 2006-15 Health and Nutrition Strategy. Maternal and child nutrition has been a key focus of UNICEF's Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP, 2006-2013) and Strategic Plan (SP, 2014-17), where nutrition is placed as an outcome area. There is also an emphasis on integrating nutrition in other areas of UNICEF's work. The SP Results Framework has specified "number of children who are moderately or severely stunted" as an impact indicator. UNICEF's funding and investment in nutrition has more than doubled over the past decade and the nutrition programme expenditure reached \$484 million in 2014.

In this context, a corporate decision was made to externally evaluate UNICEF's work to generate concrete evidence that can guide the sustainable reduction of stunting in young children.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation is twofold: Firstly, to contribute to improving the organization's **accountability** for its performance and results; and secondly, to generate evidence and **learning** to guide effective action towards the sustainable reduction of stunting in the coming years. The findings and recommendations put forth by the evaluation will be used to influence strategic direction and partnerships/advocacy as well as programme strategies (sectoral and cross-cutting) to achieve the results and targets outlined in the SP. In addition, the evidence generated by the evaluation will provide further opportunity to push for the child nutrition and sustainable development agenda in the post-2015 era.

Taking into account multi-sectoral approaches as well as UNICEF's focus on equity, children's rights and gender equality at all levels, the evaluation will:

- Assess the **relevance, appropriateness and coherence** of UNICEF's global, regional and country programme strategies and plans to address stunting in young children.
- Assess the **effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability** of UNICEF's country programmes in addressing stunting in young children with particular attention to less reached, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
- Assess UNICEF's **leadership, guidance and technical support** at all levels as well as the adequacy of UNICEF staffing/institutional capacity.
- Provide forward-looking **lessons, conclusions and recommendations** for strengthening UNICEF's work.

4 SCOPE OF WORK

The evaluation has a broad focus covering the assessment of UNICEF's global and country-level investments; it also examines the performance at the regional level in regions where stunting is a concern. The major emphasis is on country level strategies and programme results including sustainability and equity issues. In terms of geographic/regional focus, the evaluation will target mainly South Asia and Africa where under-five stunting prevalence rates are among the highest and where the vast majority of the children affected by stunting are located. The evaluation will also examine the phenomenon of stunting in middle income countries, especially where stunting rates remain at high levels compared to the gains recorded in other key socio-economic indicators. In terms of the time-frame covered, the evaluation will focus on 2010-2015 with greater focus on the past two years, a period when UNICEF's advocacy and investments for reducing stunting have grown rapidly.

5 PERIOD OF ASSIGNMENT AND EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation team is expected to be contracted in late November 2015 for a January 2016 start of the evaluation. The evaluation will be staged in three phases: the Inception Phase, the Data Collection Phase, and the Analysis and Reporting Phase. During a comprehensive **Inception Phase**, the evaluation team will assess the adequacy of UNICEF's results chain/theory of change on stunting for implementation at the field level. The team will review findings from the relevant literature and develop the conceptual framework, detailed evaluation matrix and action plan for conducting the exercise. During the **Data Collection Phase**, the evaluation team will as a first step collect data

through desk reviews, interviews (at global and regional levels) and a brief questionnaire to UNICEF Country Offices. Once a sample of 6-8 case study countries and 20-25 desk review countries has been identified, the evaluation team will consider programme effectiveness at the field level, also taking into account the use of gender and equity principles. Key informant interviews with UNICEF staff and partner agencies, in-depth reviews of key programme documents and annual reports and a global survey are likely to supplement field-based data collection. During the **Analysis and Reporting Phase**, the evaluation team will employ a mixed-methods approach entailing triangulation of findings to arrive at evaluative conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation team will, under the overall responsibility of the team leader, draft successive versions of the Evaluation Report for review by UNICEF EO and an Evaluation Advisory Group which will be established in support of the evaluation. The evaluation team will report to a Senior Evaluation Officer in UNICEF's Evaluation Office. The evaluation is expected to be completed by mid-November 2016.

6 DESIRED TEAM COMPOSITION AND PROFILE

Qualified institutions (consultancy firms, universities, etc.) that have the capabilities to meet the following requirements, and are available for the evaluation period indicated, are invited to submit an EOI.

The team will consist of

(a) A **Team Leader** (at P5/D1 level) with the following credentials:

- Strong team leadership and management track record and commitment to delivering timely and high-quality evaluation report;
- Extensive evaluation expertise (at least 10 years) of comprehensive scope with strong mixed-methods evaluation skills and flexibility in using non-traditional and innovative evaluation methods;
- Familiarity with UNICEF's programming, policy and advocacy work and experience in evaluating multi-sectoral initiatives would be an asset;
- Background in public nutrition including sound knowledge of policy and system aspects; familiarity with others sectors, namely health, WASH, education and social protection;
- Knowledge of the UN's human rights, gender equality and equity agendas and experience in applying these to evaluation;
- Good interpersonal and communication skills and the ability to interact with various stakeholders and to concisely express ideas and concepts in written and oral form;
- Language proficiency: Fluency in English mandatory, good command of French desirable.

(b) Two (2) **Team Members** (evaluation or research experts with background in public nutrition and with strong multi-sectoral orientation) who have

- Significant experience in evaluation and/or policy research with background in public nutrition or other areas relevant to addressing child stunting (at least 5 years);
- Experience in evaluating multi-sectoral programmes or initiatives;
- Strong conceptualization, analytical and writing skills and ability to work effectively in a team;
- Hands-on experience in collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data;
- Knowledge of the UN's human rights, gender equality and equity agendas and application in evaluation;

- Commitment and willingness to work in a challenging environment and ability to produce quality work under limited guidance and supervision;
- Good communication and people skills, ability to communicate with various stakeholders and to express ideas and concepts concisely and clearly in written and oral form;
- Language proficiency: Fluency in English is mandatory, good command of French and or Spanish is desirable.

(c) A **Research Assistant** who has

- At least 3 years of progressively responsible experience in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis;
- Experience in supporting senior evaluators in ensuring use of consistent interview protocols, templates for recording and reporting on interviews, standard case study report formats and a comparative table of findings;
- Familiarity with nutrition and related issues/sectors an advantage.

(d) A **Data Analyst** who has

- At least 3 years of experience in knowledge management for evaluation, information technology and data management;
- Expertise in handling collaborate teamwork software, online surveys, document repositories, bibliography software and databases;
- Commitment to handling back-office support and logistics as needed.

The team on the whole is expected to be balanced with respect to gender, origin (developed/developing countries) and linguistic capacity (English/French/Spanish must be covered). The evaluation team should demonstrate a firm grasp of the ethical issues associated with working with children and of the recognition that the safety and welfare of rights-holders is paramount.

7 SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Interested institutions are encouraged to complete and submit the attached EOI form. Please submit one form only per proposed evaluation team. EOIs should be sent to evalofficeapplications@unicef.org no later than **close of business on 1st October, 2015**. Please quote “Reducing Stunting in Children under Five Years of Age: A Comprehensive Evaluation of UNICEF’s Strategies and Programme Performance” as the subject in your correspondence.

This EOI does not constitute a solicitation. We do not require bids or proposals at this stage; we merely seek your expression of interest in participating in the tender. A response to this Call for Expression of Interest does not automatically ensure that you will be selected to participate in the tender. Further details on the evaluation (draft Terms of Reference, ToR) can be sent to interested parties upon request. A final ToR will be provided to those vendors invited to submit a full proposal by way of a Request for Proposal for Services (RFPS). Following the RFPS, short-listed institutions will be invited to participate in an interview.

UNICEF reserves the right to change or cancel requirements at any time during the EOI and/or solicitation process. UNICEF also reserves the right to require compliance with additional conditions as and when issuing the final tender document. If you have any questions about this EOI, please email Krishna Belbase (kbelbase@unicef.org) and Tina Tordjman-Nebe (ttordjmannebe@unicef.org). Emails only, please; calls will not be returned.

UNICEF Evaluation Office – Expression of Interest Form (Institutions)

REDUCING STUNTING IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE: A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Please fill-in the form (up to 10 pages total) and submit to evalofficeapplications@unicef.org

Full Name of Institution:

Type of Entity:

User Salutation: Dr. Ms. Mr.

First Name:

Last Name:

Job Title/Role in Entity:

Mobile Phone Number: (please include country & city code)

Fax Number: (please include country & city code)

Contact E-mail Address:

Mailing Address:

City:

State:

Postal Code:

Country:

Address of Internet Website:

Alternate Contact Person:

Please answer the following mandatory questions:

- 1. Describe in no more than two pages the organisational and financial profile of your institution, including**
 - Its organisational structure, including any associates, partner firms, etc. and the numbers of years it has been in the consultancy business;**
 - Its most relevant past experience(s) in relation to the proposed consultancy.**
- 2. Summarise the profile of the proposed evaluation team using no more than a page for the team leader and half a page per team member. Please attach the curriculum vitae of the team leader and members.**

The duration of the assignment will be from January to November 2016.

- 3. Confirmation that your entity:**
 - Has no on-going litigation with the UN;**
 - Is not currently removed/invalidated or suspended by the United Nations or UN system organisations;**
 - Shall declare if it currently employs or anticipates employing any person(s) who was/were employed by the UN in the field of nutrition.**

The presence of a conflict of interest of any kind (e.g., having worked for or partnered with UNICEF on stunting policy/strategy or implementation during the timeframe evaluated) will automatically disqualify prospective team members from consideration.