

Terms of Reference For Institutional Consultancy

<i>Title:</i>	<i>Local contractor to collect and analyze data on institutional capacities, parenting practices, and norms in Tajikistan</i>
<i>Consultancy Mode:</i>	National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Type of Contract:</i>	Institutional
<i>Mode of Selection:</i>	Competitive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Location</i>	<i>Tajikistan</i>
<i>Duration of Contract:</i>	<i>6 months</i>

1. Background

Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognizes family and parenting support as an important part of national social policies and social investment packages aimed at reducing poverty, decreasing inequality, and promoting positive parental and child well-being.¹ Parenting interventions have the potential to help countries and communities achieve the SDGs and are directly relevant to several SDG targets, most notably: Target 16.2 “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children and torture of children”; Target 4.2 “Provide access to quality early childhood development and care”; Target 5.2 “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”, and Target 16.1 “Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”. In addition, the sustained delivery of parenting interventions can advance the achievement of universal social protection systems (Target 1.3), and preventing violence against children through parenting interventions may contribute indirectly towards several other SDG goals, including: the reduction of preventable deaths for children under 5 years (Target 3.2); improved mental health (Target 3.4); and reduced inequalities by providing parenting interventions to families most in need (Target 10.3).²

Within this ToR, parenting support services is defined as the provision of information and services aimed at strengthening parents, behaviours, knowledge, confidence, and skills to help achieve the best outcomes for young children and families. In the meantime, parents transmit socio-cultural heritage to their offspring through modelling, communicating, and behaving. Very often, parenting behaviours reflect goal directed strategies based on cultural values, customs, and beliefs³. Parents/caregivers have a difficult task – they are trying to balance traditional cultural values and dominant societal norms while yearning to create opportunities for their children to develop and thrive regardless of their gender⁴. In terms of parenting behaviours, the support is usually provided for responsive caregiving, service-seeking behaviours, and self-care. Specifically, following definition will be used during the assignment: “Parenting programmes are interventions, activities or services that engage parents on strengthening their knowledge, behaviours, and practices for supporting child development and parental well-being:

In Tajikistan, evidence related to parenting practices is scarce. However, few thematic KAPB studies undertaken on MCH, and childcare practices have been guiding parenting initiative in selected UNICEF supported districts. Findings from the (2020-2021) UNICEF commissioned KAPB studies provide key insights related to prenatal, natal, post-natal maternal, child nutrition discipline and childcare practices. It recommends improving parenting practices, including timely antenatal visits, maternal nutrition intake, physical activity, know-how of danger signs, family planning and building capacity of workforce on these. However, the findings and recommendation of the studies could not be generalized due to sample size (7 interventions district out of 67) and limited scope of inquiry.

In many families, communities, and societies, and right from birth, gender discrimination affects girls disproportionately – and girls’ chances to realize their rights and to live a life of dignity. It also impacts boys and increases the risk of toxic masculinity. Parents/caregivers are usually the primary, the most potent, and constant agents of socialisation, including gender socialisation. Parents carry their baggage of gender stereotypes and suffer

³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15295192.2012.683359>

⁴ https://www.unicef.org/media/134441/file/Gender_Transformative_Parenting_Resource_Modules.pdf

tremendous societal pressure to preserve existing norms and power imbalance. They may consciously or unconsciously transfer discriminatory gender norms to their children, and thus hinder their development and wellbeing and limit their life chances. Evidence shows that equitable parenting roles are also positively related to parental wellbeing⁵. It is the entrusted and abiding task of parents to prepare children, as they develop, for the physical, psychosocial, and economic conditions in which they live, work, play, learn and thrive. Amidst the many influences on child development, parents are critical to children's development, protection, empowerment, adjustment, and lifelong success. Families, parents, and other caregivers play a central role in child well-being and development. They offer identity, love, nurturing care and protection to children and adolescents as well as economic security and stability. Parents should be seen as a part of the broader system in which other agents of gender socialisation play important roles (siblings, relatives, peers, teachers, health and social workers, celebrities, religious leaders, etc.), and various media (movies, advertisement, social media) and enterprises. What parents/caregivers do with and to their children is coloured by gender either negatively (harmful social norms and behaviours), or positively (liberating children and providing them with choices)⁶

UNICEF defines parenting as the interactions, behaviours, emotions, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and practices associated with the provision of nurturing care. This refers to the process of promoting and supporting the development and socialization of the child. Thus, support to parents and caregivers in positive care for their young children and themselves is one for the results for UNICEF's Program Framework for Early Childhood Development. UNICEF's Strategy to parenting is guided by three elements i.e., levels, platforms, and ages. UNICEF programming takes a life course approach to parenting, encompassing early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. Based on parenting support pyramid the existing UNICEF intervention on parenting in Tajikistan include:

- Population –based information provision: Bebbu, Regional UNICEF mobile application that was adapted and contextualized that is tailored to support parents and caregivers of children aged 0-6, offers wealth of information on crucial parenting domains, on health, nutrition, immunization, play and help parents understand milestones related child's physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth and provides filtered information on nurturing care needed for optimum growth, for specific age. Parents are also supported through the awareness raising campaigns on health, breastfeeding and immunization using a digital space and television/radio for communication.
- Integration in routine services: Integrating parenting support into routine services and existing delivery platforms through sectoral 'touch points' - health and nutrition (improving counselling services of healthcare workers and home visiting practices; community-based parenting groups in 7 districts), education (supporting Teachers-Parents Associations based at school and development of parenting support at pre-primary education through the Learning Passport platform) social protection services (improving services for the guardianship through the policy advocacy)
- Targeted support is provided to the vulnerable caregivers and children to prevent child institutionalization through the existing Family and Child Support Centers and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Units at PHC.
- Intensive support is being modeled to provide support to caregivers to meet developmental needs of children within the existing ECI services.

Given the above context, there is a need to understand the parenting landscape from supply and demand perspective. At the supply side, an improved understanding of the existing service delivery platforms, their structures, functions, human resources, their skills, and capacities, across multiple sectors including health, hygiene, nutrition, protection, education, safety, and care is needed. At the demand side; deeper understanding of current parenting practices, their drivers (enablers and barriers); including knowledge, motivation, behaviours, social and gender norms is required.

2. Purpose and specific objectives

The study aims at understanding and mapping the parenting landscape from the policy, supply, and demand perspectives to recommend strategic choices for strengthening parenting services in Tajikistan. Specific objective for the local agency is to support collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data as per design of the study.

3. Scope of Work

⁵ [Gender Transformative Parenting Resource Modules.pdf \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/media/134441/file/Gender_Transformative_Parenting_Resource_Modules.pdf)

⁶ https://www.unicef.org/media/134441/file/Gender_Transformative_Parenting_Resource_Modules.pdf

The Contractor, under these terms of reference, is required to collaborate with the international research company, which will provide guidance on methodology and analysis. The Contractor will be responsible for planning and executing data collection, analysing the data based on the developed analysis framework, and supporting the finalization of both qualitative and quantitative study reports, aimed at achieving the stated objectives.

Specific deliverables and key tasks, expected from the contractor are outlined in below table.

Key deliverables	Key tasks
<p><u>Deliverable 1</u> Inception report</p>	<p>1.1. Develop the data collection and quality assurance plan in collaboration with the international research company, based on the provided study design and data analysis framework.</p> <p>1.2. Select geographic locations for data collection in consultation with international partners, the Technical Working Group (TWG), and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>1.3. Recruit the data collection team, and ensure their availability for training, demonstration, field testing, and data collection.</p>
<p><u>Deliverable 2</u> Report on data collection and analysis</p>	<p>2.1. Implement the research plan and obtain ethical approval clearance.</p> <p>2.2. Translate, field test, and approve research tools and guidelines for focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and observation checklists, ensuring they align with the conceptual/theoretical framework on parenting.</p> <p>2.3. Conduct data collection in the field, including observations, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, using tools designed to capture information on psychological, social, and environmental factors.</p> <p>2.4. Collaborate with the international research company to develop an analysis report that highlights gender-transformative findings and addresses components in health, education, child protection, and social protection, with corresponding recommendations.</p> <p>2.5. Analyse implications according to the analysis framework, visualize the data, and share the draft analysis report with the Technical Working Group (TWG).</p>
<p><u>Deliverable 3</u> Final data and report</p>	<p>3.1. Provide all raw and refined data in electronic format to UNICEF.</p> <p>3.2. Submit the final assignment report.</p>

2 Methodology

The study shall apply combination of various theoretical models. Overall, the study shall be guided by the ‘UNICEF’s Parenting Support Framework on Early Childhood Development, shaped by the programmatic pyramid of parenting support using the universal progressive approach to support key components of parenting behaviours. It however should also benefit from other system and capacity strengthening focused conceptual/theoretical framework (like Service delivery system design) and behavioural models (like Behaviour Driver Model, SEM. Social Norm Theory).

The study shall use mix method approach and may involve surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The study shall use quantitative and qualitative methods to examine what service delivery mechanisms, structures, function are available and being used for delivery of parenting services and how being a parent and raising children (both boys and girls) is understood in the country, situating parent-child relationships within broader dynamics of family and community life, and identifying beliefs, values, and barriers, including those related to gender norms and gender socialization, that shape their experience as parents. The study will also explore and categorize different ways of being a mother and father in Tajikistan and be a source of recommendations for programs, activities, and social and behaviour change interventions to promote positive and gender transformative parenting under a cross-sectoral approach.

In terms of process, the contractor is required to work closely with the international partner, UNICEF ECD and UNICEF SBC Teams, Government counterparts (Ministry of Health & Social Protection, Committee on Women and Family Affairs and Ministry of Education) and CSO partners during inception, planning, execution, and reporting of

the assignment. To this end, the research team may be required to work with a technical and or oversight forum/committees which will review and clear all methods, tools and products developed as a result.

The consultancy will be guided by UNEG Ethical Guidelines⁷ and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards⁸. Only adults (age 18+) should be invited to participate in both qualitative and quantitative study. The common guiding principles will be used to ensure ethical safety during the review process:

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Informed consent
- Harm and benefits
- Conflict of interest

The contractor will explain to the participants the purpose and use of the study; they will also make it explicitly clear to the participants that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw at any moment. Throughout the process, the interviewers should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders.

3 Work plan

The detailed workplan and technical proposal to be provided by the potential vendor and finalized after the consultations with the UNICEF multi-disciplinary ECD/ECE, SBC, PME and Gender team.

4 Deliverables and payment schedule

Payments against all deliverables are conditioned to acceptance of the respective deliverables, that adhered to minimum quality standards defined by UNICEF, TWG or Ethical Review Board. In general, following schedule for achievement of deliverables and related payment will be followed.

Deliverables	Duration	Tentative schedule	Schedule of payment (% of total contract amount)
Deliverable 1: Inception report	2 months	November 2024	20%
Deliverable 2: Report on data collection and analysis	3 months	March 2025	40%
Deliverable 3: Final data report	1 months	April 2025	40%
TOTAL			100%

5 Management and supervision

The institution will work closely with the international partner, technical working group. It however will directly report to UNICEF Tajikistan ECD Officer in UNICEF for final acceptance/clearance of all deliverables and invoices.

6 Reporting requirements

The contractor is expected to hand over all accepted products/assets to UNICEF Tajikistan in a hard drive and provide a -written report on the results of the tasks delivered after the completion of the project in the PDF format with photographs, caption texts and description of key achievements.

7 Qualification requirements/specialized knowledge/experience required to complete the tasks:

- Demonstrated capacity to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data.
- Evidence of previous capacity of hiring relevant qualified, competent nationally based staff to conduct qualitative and quantitative data for social research and studies.
- Experience of and demonstrated understanding of ethical and quality standards of social research.
- Demonstrated capacity to work with the UN system, with institutional counterparts preferably in Early Childhood, and Social and Behavior Change research in the local context.

⁷ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

⁸ UNICEF PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS, April 2015

- Demonstrated ability to facilitate and navigate ethical and quality reviews by institutional review boards (IRB).
- Demonstrated internal quality assurance mechanisms or systems for products, deliverables before submitting to UNICEF.
- Familiarity with local social and cultural context

The Financial Proposal should be presented in separate file and includes the following:

- Budget, with fees listed according to the deliverables outlined in the ToR.

8 Evaluation process and methods

The evaluation methodology is based on a highest combined score (based on the 70% technical offer and 30% price weight distribution).

Each interested institution is requested to submit in a proposed approach for such assignment along with a copy of the organization profile, the proposed technical team curriculum vitae, expected budget as well as a sample of previous work undertaken in the last two years.

After the opening, each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its financial value price. The proposal with the best overall value, composed of technical merit and price, will be recommended for approval. UNICEF will set up an evaluation panel composed of technical and procurement staff and their conclusions will be forwarded to the internal UNICEF Contracts Review Committee or other relevant approving authority. The evaluation panel will first evaluate each response for compliance with the requirements of this Terms of Reference. Responses deemed not to meet all the mandatory requirements will be considered non-compliant and rejected at this stage without further consideration. Failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions contained in these Terms of Reference, including provision of all required information, may result in a response or proposal being disqualified from further consideration.

The overall weighting between technical and price evaluation will be based on the predefined criteria. The technical component will account for 70% of the total points allocated and the financial component (commercial evaluation) will account for 30% of the total points allocated.

9 Technical evaluation:

The proposals will be evaluated against the following technical criteria:

Item	Technical Criteria/Qualifications	Max. Points
1	Overall Response	10
1.1	Completeness of the proposal and responsiveness to the TOR, addressing all technical requirement, section of the ToRs. (10 pts)	
2	Capability and Key Personnel	30
2.1	Academic qualification of the five key personnel of the vendor: At least one team member holds a post-graduate degree and rest of the staff members hold master's degree in social research, statistics, social science, gender, and development related subjects (10pts)	
2.2	Proven experience of key five personals in research management (data collection, data management, statistics, analysis, and reporting). (15 pts)	
2.3	Previous experience of staff working with UNICEF or UN System. (5 pts)	
3	Proposed Methodology and Approach	30
3.1	Quality of the proposed data collection and analysis plan, broken down in pre-data collection, data collection, post data collection phases. (25 pts)	
3.2	Assessment of key considerations relevant to each deliverable, potential risks, and threats, and proposed realistic mitigation plans. (5 pts)	
	Total Technical Score	70

Only Proposers obtaining a minimum of 49 points in Technical Criteria evaluation will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Technical proposals should provide sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with the requirements set out in these terms of reference. Technical proposals should include as a minimum the following:

1. Institutional Profile, Services and Expertise
2. Executive summary covering key features of the proposal and the value bidders will bring to UNICEF
3. Introduction of the technical proposal for data collection and analysis.
4. Detailed approach to data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and clear focus on gender transformative approach in the methodology
5. Corporate profile and relevant experience including previous research and Social and Behavioural Change works undertaken, duration, geographic location, thematic area.
6. Three recent sample of written work/reports undertaken.
7. Names and contact information of at least three clients should be provided for reference.
8. Key personnel credentials-
9. Quality assurance mechanisms, either in house or outsourced that ensure that evidence generation processes meet quality and ethical requirements.
10. Appendix (CVs for key staff, letters of commitment, etc.)

Commercial evaluation:

The price/cost of each of the technically compliant proposals shall be considered only after evaluation of the above technical criteria. A maximum 30 point assigned to the financial proposal will be allocated to the lowest financial proposal. All other price proposals will receive scores in inverse proportion according to the following formula:

Score for price proposal A = (Maximum score for price proposal * Price of lowest priced proposal)/Price of proposal A.

As a result of the financial evaluation, the points of each proposal will be taken into further consideration in the final evaluation.

The bidders should ensure that all pricing information is provided in accordance with the following:

- a) The currency of the proposal shall be in USD for international companies and in Tajik Somoni for the local Proposers and invoicing must be in the same currency.
- b) All prices/rates quoted must be exclusive of all taxes as UNICEF is a tax-exempt organization

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Any request for information or question should be forwarded to dushanbe@unicef.org