

UNICEF EVALUATION OFFICE

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: Two-Country Impact Evaluation on UNICEF's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Kit for Emergencies

Subject: Evaluation of UNICEF's ECD Kit
Date of the EOI: 25 February 2016
Closing Date of the EOI: 25 March 2016, 10:00 am New York Time (Eastern Standard)
Address EOI by e-mail to: evalofficeapplications@unicef.org

1.0 PURPOSE OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

UNICEF Evaluation Office (New York) plans to commission a two-country impact evaluation on UNICEF's approach to supporting inclusive and equitable play opportunities for children ages 3 to 6 through the use of the [Early Childhood Development Kit](#). This is an invitation to eligible institutions (such as consulting/evaluation firms, research institutes and universities, or vendors with similar capacities) to submit "expressions of interest" to provide services to conduct the evaluation. Institutions that meet the requirements of this EOI in terms of demonstrating their profile, past experience and capacity to conduct an impact evaluation in complex and/or emergency contexts will be shortlisted and invited to submit full technical and financial proposals. This EOI document provides a short description of the evaluation scope of work; a detailed terms of reference (ToR) and request for proposals (RfPS) will be provided to institutions that will be invited to the next stage – that of submitting full proposals.

2.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Global Context: Emergencies arising from armed conflict or natural disasters can cause serious threats to the physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being of children, their families and communities. It is estimated that over 1 billion children live in countries or territories affected by armed conflict, and of these, around 246 million are under 5 years old. Every year for the next decade, about 175 million children will be affected by natural disasters caused by climate change. With emergencies and protracted crisis on the rise, UNICEF is committed to safeguarding children's development and contributing to resilient and sustainable societies. Early childhood development programmes that encourage and incorporate inclusive play-based learning opportunities are critical to achieving this objective.

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 31 states that every child has the right to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child. However, play is often undervalued in many learning contexts in early childhood and primary school for a variety of cultural, economic and institutional reasons. Play is crucial for children's development and resilience by supporting their creativity, self-confidence, communication skills, and cognitive functioning. Play that enables children to participate in group learning with their peers and adults can also promote a sense of comfort, trust, safety and belonging. Play also contributes to improved health outcomes for children by lowering their anxiety and stress levels to support optimal brain development. For these reasons, innovative approaches are required to ensure children's right to play are realized, especially among the most marginalized groups of children living in emergency or crisis contexts.

UNICEF Programming Context: UNICEF advocates for children's right to play as a basis for supporting their learning and development in its [child rights policy frameworks on early childhood development](#) (ECD) and programmes such as [peacebuilding and education advocacy](#), [child friendly schools](#), [child friendly spaces](#) and [education in emergencies](#). Since 2009, UNICEF's [Early Childhood Development Kit](#) (ECD kit) has been the primary service strategy to supporting young children's right to play when integrated into an existing ECD centres and programmes. The ECD kit consists of a box filled with early learning, play and psychosocial materials that address the developmental progress of children from birth to age six, as well as resource guides to support early childhood development programme managers in its implementation and use.¹ The ECD kit can be used by up to 50 children at one time in a range of early childhood care settings, such as preschools, community and home-based ECD centres, nutrition and feeding centres and child friendly spaces in

¹ See, for example: [Early Childhood Development Kit: Activity Guide](#); and the [ECD Kit Handbook for Caregivers](#).

emergencies. The aim is to reduce toxic stress for children through play after an emergency, and to increase the capacity of children, parents, preschool teachers, and duty bearers to support early learning and development in a range of programming contexts.

In December 2015, the Evaluation Office and Early Childhood Development Section at UNICEF HQ completed an assessment on the distribution, uses and potential outcomes of the ECD kits when integrated into existing UNICEF programming in early childhood. The assessment found the ECD kits were used in [86 countries](#) with more than four million young children and their caregivers in emergency, peacebuilding and development contexts from 2009 and 2015. The kits were successfully integrated into diverse ECD/ECE programmes in collaboration with a range of partners (such as international and local NGOs and government ministries) through one-time workshops with community volunteers, supervision and mentoring of parents, and train-the-trainer approaches with preschool teachers. These trainings supported parents and caregivers to gain skills and knowledge for using the ECD kit play and learning resources. UNICEF staff reported the ECD kits had potential for supporting children's early learning, development, and psychosocial well-being, as well as fostering positive relationships among children, and between children and their caregivers. However, the assessment also revealed that additional programming and capacity development were required in order for the ECD kit play and learning materials to be leveraged to their fullest potential for children and their caregivers.

Purpose of the evaluation: The purpose of the evaluation is to test different approaches for building adult capacities to play with children using the ECD kits when integrated into community-based ECD centres or as an emergency response for young children and their caregivers in child friendly spaces. The evaluation will examine the impact of the existing ECD kit package when compared to the ECD kit with an additional innovation (such as ICT/training approaches that support facilitators to effectively use the materials). The objective is to generate evidence through the evaluation to understand the efficacy of various approaches for using the kits in different programming contexts. The evaluation will assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the ECD kit-related intervention on the psychosocial well-being, learning and development of girls and boys ages 3 to 6, and on parent and/or caregiver practices.

Evaluation rationale and uses: While several assessments regarding the use of ECD kits within specific countries affected by emergencies have occurred, the evidence available on these interventions is largely anecdotal in nature. Given UNICEF and its partners have invested more than 20 million USD in the provision of the ECD kits globally since 2009, an evaluation that examines impact is timely and critical. The evaluation results will inform decision-making on UNICEF's future programming for the ECD kit package by providing recommendations to support and leverage play-based innovations in early childhood. The evaluation will also provide recommendations for scaling up effective play-based early learning interventions to advocate with government ministries for the provision of stimulating environments for children, where caregivers practice play as a cornerstone approach to child learning and development.

Indicative scope: The evaluation will take place in two countries to examine the use and impact of the ECD play kit in one development and one humanitarian context. Indicative countries are [Senegal](#) and [Lebanon](#); the final selection of countries will be determined by UNICEF prior to the issuing of the Request for Proposals (RfPS). The evaluation is expected to measure the outputs, outcomes and impact of the ECD kits for children ages 3 to 6, and for their caregivers (such as parents, teachers, and community members) enrolled in well-established community-based ECD centres or in child friendly spaces serving refugee families. Appendix A presents an initial theory of change or measurement framework that will be applied and adapted in both countries – which should provide further indication of the scope of the evaluation. Evaluation questions and a more extensive evaluation methodology will be made available at a later stage, when institutions that are judged as having the required capacity will be invited to submit full proposals and bids to conduct the evaluation.

3.0 TEAM COMPOSITION AND PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Given the longitudinal scope and complexity of this evaluation, at least one professional with significant technical expertise at a senior level is required, with support from other researchers or evaluators who have solid field experience in challenging environments using innovative data collection tools, as well as organizational back-office support staff. In

their expression of interest to be considered to conduct this evaluation, institutions are required to indicate their capacity to provide a team of evaluation specialists with expertise in: the early childhood development and early learning education sector, quasi-experimental impact evaluations, and in particular, early learning/development measurement and/or programming experience, the evaluation of innovations, and participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches.

We require institutions to demonstrate familiarity with UNICEF's work for children's rights and women's rights, and to be able to communicate in English, Arabic and French. Institutions should also demonstrate experience/familiarity with undertaking evaluations in partnership with local agencies and actors (such as national universities or the Ministry of Education) to undertake and assess young children and their caregivers through household surveys. A demonstrated capacity to assemble a team that is gender balanced and with varying levels of experience to maximize the cost effectiveness or value for services of the evaluation will be an added advantage. Institutions that have experience with innovative M&E tools (such as digital data entry and analysis platforms like SMS, tablets, etc.) will have an added advantage given the remote nature of many UNICEF programmes.

The Evaluation Office encourages interested institutions to provide an *indicative team of evaluators*, with the understanding that more work of finding the relevant team members and ascertaining their availability will be carried out at the proposal-writing stage. However, institutions will be assessed favorably for proposing a highly qualified team leader, and giving assurance of his/her availability. Institutions that can assemble an evaluation team or demonstrate an existing partnership or have branch/local offices to support evaluations in Africa and the Middle East will have an added advantage.

Period of assignment: The evaluation will take place in two phases beginning in July 2016 and ending in September 2018. The timeline for the first phase of the impact evaluation is approximately 9 months, beginning in July 2016 through February 2017, including one field visit with each country to train data enumerators and to manage the collection of baseline data. The primary deliverables of the first phase include: 1) a vetted and operational evaluation plan/design for each country based upon a common evaluation framework (see Appendix A); 2) an evaluation toolkit in English and the local language to support ethical, reliable and valid baseline data collection; and 3) a baseline evaluation report (including the submission of digital baseline data). The end-line data collection for the evaluation will take place at least 6-9 months after the intervention was implemented, beginning in January/February 2018 through September 2018 (approximately 7 months). The primary deliverable for the end-line data is an impact evaluation report, including one field visit with each country to (re)train data enumerators and to manage the collection of end-line data. NOTE: UNICEF reserves the right to contract the different phases of this evaluation with the same institution, or a different institution.

4.0 SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Interested and eligible institutions (consulting/evaluation firms, research institutes universities or vendors with similar capacities) are required to complete and submit the EOI form in Appendix B, and provide a response (**not more than 4 pages, excluding attachments**) to the six open-ended questions on the second page of the EOI form.

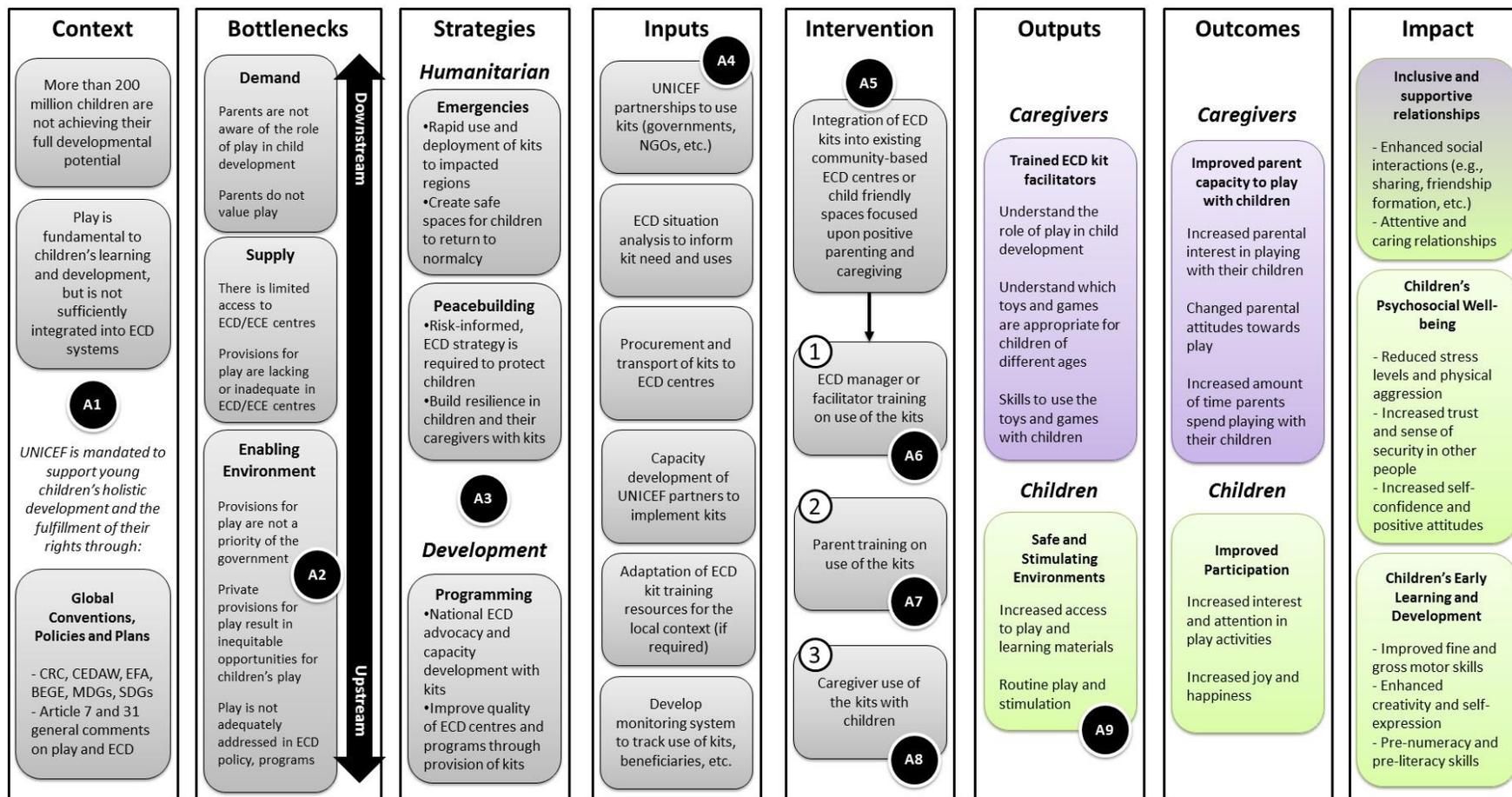
EOI submissions should be sent via email to: evalofficeapplications@unicef.org no later than **25 March 2016, at 10:00 am New York Time** (Eastern Standard), under the subject heading **Expression of Interest: Evaluation of UNICEF's ECD Kit**.

Please note the following:

1. This EOI does not constitute a solicitation. We seek only an expression of interest in being invited to tender for the evaluation, and not proposals or price quotes.
2. A response to this request for EOI does not ensure automatic selection to participate in the tendering process.
3. UNICEF reserves the right to change or cancel this EOI at any time, or to require compliance with additional conditions in subsequent stages of the solicitation process.
4. Responses received without a duly completed form or an incomplete form will not be considered.

Following this EOI, institutions will be short-listed and invited to tender. More detailed Terms of Reference (TORs) will be sent to short-listed institutions in the form of a Request for Proposal of Services (RfPS) during April 2016. The RfPS will remain open for 4-5 weeks from the day of issue.

Appendix A: Draft Theory of Change – ECD Kit Impact Evaluation Framework



Key Assumptions/Risks:

- A1 – The UNICEF Country Office and relevant government ministries have identified ECD as a priority
- A2 – Governments lack information and evidence on the value of play and cost-effective strategies for integrating play into national ECD systems
- A3 – Strategies vary by context, which affects the type of training provided and the 'dosage' children and parents receive with the ECD kits
- A4 – Inputs assume adequate resourcing and technical capacities among UNICEF staff
- A5 – The existing programme in which the ECD kit activities are integrated is well-established or the country office has experience in using the kits for emergency response for ECD
- A6 – Managers believe in the value of play to improve child development outcomes and have some basic knowledge of ECD
- A7 – Innovations in training will result in positive parent and child outcomes
- A8 – Managers and parents actively use the ECD kits, rather than keeping them in storage to prevent wear and tear
- A9 – Assumes an adequate 'dosage' of play opportunities over a period of time (at least 6-9 months of routine exposure to the materials)

**Appendix B: UNICEF Evaluation Office – Expression of Interest Form
Two-Country Impact Evaluation on UNICEF’s Early Childhood Development (ECD) Kit for Emergencies**

Please fill-in page 1 of the form in its entirety and submit it to us electronically or via fax.

Full Company Name:

Type of Company:

User Salutation: Mr. Ms. Mrs. Dr.

First Name:

Last Name:

Job Title:

Mobile: (please include country & city code)

Fax: (please include country & city code)

Official e-mail address:

Office Address:

City:

State:

Postal Code:

Country:

Website Address:

Alternate contact person:

Please respond to the six mandatory questions below in a narrative not exceeding 4 pages, excluding attachments.

- 1. Provide information which will enable us to determine whether your company/organization has the capacity to carry out a two-country impact evaluation. Information should include:**
 - a) organizational structure and infrastructure in place to support the evaluation, including an overview of company financial profile;
 - b) staff capacity, both technical and support staff (to the extent possible, attach CVs of prospective team members, pending confirmation of their availability); and,
 - c) the year in which the company or consultancy firm started operating, and the number of years in the consultancy business.

- 2. Provide information which will enable us to determine whether your company/organization has relevant evaluation experience. Information should include:**
 - a) a description of the technical competencies of proposed team members, and the number of years of evaluation experience;
 - b) a description of the type of evaluations the organization has carried out, evaluation experience of individual team members, and indicate if they have worked for your company before in the capacity that is being proposed; and,
 - c) evaluations commissioned by UN agencies and other comparable organizations that the company/organizations conducted, or proposed individual team members participated in.

- 3. Provide information which will enable us to determine whether your team or organization has relevant specialized knowledge on issues to be covered by the current evaluation. Information should include;**
 - a) a description of early childhood development monitoring and evaluation experience, such as developing programming monitoring tools through participatory processes, conducting ECD needs assessments, KAP studies on positive parenting practices, and evaluating topics relevant to this work (such as play and early learning, adult capacity development in the ECD or Education sector, etc.); and,
 - b) a description of impact evaluation experience, or experience in conducting quasi-experimental evaluations in complex settings, such as in emergency contexts.

- 4. Provide any additional experience that may be critical to the success of the proposed evaluation. This should include**
 - a) ability to communicate in UN languages indicate in this expression of interest (English, French and Arabic) and any other non-UN languages (list language capabilities only for confirmed team members and support staff);
 - b) experience in developing/using innovative monitoring and evaluation data collection and analysis tools (such as tablets, SMS platforms, etc.);
 - c) experience of team members having worked in emergency or challenging environments;
 - d) team members or partnership agreements with local institutions and actors or branch offices in Africa and the Middle East who can contribute to this evaluation; and
 - e) any other pertinent information that may be relevant to the evaluation.

- 5. What Quality Assurance Certifications (technical or financial) does your company have? If the organization/company has any certifications, please provide a short description of internal mechanisms for assuring the quality of products.**

- 6. Confirm that the company or any team member:**
 - a) has no on-going litigation with the UN;
 - b) is not currently removed/invalidated or suspended by the United Nations or UN system organizations