

1. Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented public health emergency affecting all countries worldwide. Egypt have taken appropriate isolation measures to avoid or delay the increase of cases. These measures included closure of child care and educational institutions and limiting mobility of its population through imposition of partial curfew during evening time and closure of places of social and religious gatherings in order to promote 'social distancing' that is considered to be the most effective measure of limiting the spread of the disease. While the priority of the country is to protect the population from coronavirus and save lives, Egypt is likely to experience negative socio - economic impact from this outbreak in many ways. For the early childhood development sector, lost opportunities, including learning time due to preventive closure of nurseries and other childcare service outlets can have long-term effects on children, particularly if parents have jobs that cannot be done remotely or disadvantaged children who are often deprived of quality parental input. There is a potential negative financial impact on the sustainability of non-profit nurseries as a result of children staying at home. Further, families in low-middle income group engaged in the informal economy or small-scale formal business or employment, will also be hardly affected and may relapse to negative coping strategies like disinvestments in childcare and education. Egypt has around 14,000 registered nurseries serving nearly 1 million children under 6 years of age, mostly operated by individuals (51%) and NGOS (45%). MOSS provides nominal subsidies to almost 50% of nurseries operated by NGOs.

In March 2020, all nurseries were instructed by MOSS to close down as a preventive measure for the coronavirus infection. Early childhood care system in Egypt is not like K-12 education system in which schools will be able to reopen and teachers will be compensated regardless of the length of time schools are closed. Community based nurseries provide needs-based services with limited cash flows depending mainly on children enrolment fees, and thus have been negatively impacted by the lockdown. Similarly, nurseries operating as a business are facing threats of permanent closure if the nursery gets into debt trying to cover salaries, rent and other running costs. Protecting the supply of early childhood care in all settings (community based, private) is critical for child development and women economic empowerment, particularly that 94% of employees within nurseries are female. Early childhood care is an essential and integral part of the education and employment infrastructure. Parents are reliant on nurseries for childcare so they can participate in income earning opportunities.

Given the crisis, an agency will be recruited to conduct a rapid assessment of the situation of the childcare system in Egypt, particularly nurseries, arising from COVID-19 pandemic to help prepare and build resilience. The assessment will help understanding the emerging bottlenecks and constraints faced by nurseries due to the pandemic containment measures to enhance adapting response to real needs. Qualitative research methods will be conducted and developed to be suitable to the context of COVID-19 including telephone-based interviews.

2. Purpose and Scope of Assignment:

The purpose of the rapid assessment is to inform MOSS and UNICEF workplan design and implementation with reference to COVID-19 disruptions and the capacity building plans for ECD workforce led by Central Association for KG Supervisors League (CAKSL). The results will also be used to inform the national reform plans and strategies for ECD lead by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM)

The main users of the assessment are UNICEF Program staff, MOSS Motherhood and Childhood Care Section Staff, and CAKSL staff.

The main objective of the rapid assessment is to obtain information to better understand challenges and potential consequences facing nurseries due to COVID-19 pandemic relating to:

- Implications of COVID-19 outbreak on nurseries, coping methods applied by nurseries to reduce negative impact on children due to lockdown - implications on the workforce, staff retainment, salaries, insurance, parents, etc.
- Preparedness of the nurseries for re-opening, including implementation of protective measures to keep children and staff safe.
- Financial constraints, subsidy allowances and strategies to recoup income during post lockdown recovery

Based on the findings, the research agency will draft recommendations to support minimizing the consequences of the lockdowns on nurseries, parents and children.

Scope:

The rapid assessment is a pulse survey of the current situation of existing nurseries facing challenges raised by COVID-19 pandemic. The assessment, to be conducted in a duration of 6 weeks, will include a representative sample of main categories of nurseries (e.g. nurseries run by individuals, civil society organization, community-based nurseries). Further in-depth studies may be conducted as required at a later stage.

The study will include rural and urban communities in the governorates where the UNICEF and ECD National Reform programs are currently being implemented namely; Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Gharbia, Ismailia, Red Sea, and Aswan governorates. The selected governorates represent various geographical zones in Egypt and are characterized by dense nursery services representing 42% of the total number of registered nurseries nationwide

The study will target owners, directors, facilitators, and parents. The results of the research are intended to inform the MOSS, UNICEF and stakeholders about the gaps currently existing in the system and recommend subsequent actions to address these gaps to enable nurseries to overcome negative impact of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, results will inform MOSS and UNICEF plans to: 1) develop guidelines for reopening nurseries; and 2) develop plans for scaling up quality nurseries; and 3) develop plans to improve performance of workforce in nurseries.

3. Research methodology

Taking into consideration the limitations in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the recruited agency will develop a detailed action plan including the assessment procedures and tools, sampling technique, data collection protocols and data management, time schedule, and sample respondents. The plan will be developed in consultation with UNICEF and stakeholders. The rapid assessment will include a representation from different country regions with focus on UNICEF targeted governorates.

Sample size and stratification: It is estimated to select a sample of average 120 nurseries. The sample will represent both individual and NGO-operated nurseries. The key informants will include NGO Directors, nursery owners, nursery managers, supervisors, facilitators and parents, to gather a range of perspectives and experiences and to triangulate information. The exact number of nurseries and interviews will be decided jointly with researchers. MOSS & CAKSL will provide contacts for nurseries.

Data collection: A data collection plan, including interview protocol, will be designed to include a set of questions to understand impact of preventive measures of COVID-19 on nurseries, coping methods applied to reduce negative impact, and support needed to continue providing services after reopen following strict hygiene measures.

On-line training will be conducted for interviewers on the protocol. Interviewers will use telephone /other distance communication approaches to collect data from the field.

Results of the study will inform programs to support re-opening of nurseries and provision of safe and quality services.

4. Ethical considerations

The assessment should adhere to UNICEF's procedures on ethics in evidence generation including the ethical considerations in evidence generation during C19. The data will be collected from adults (18+) through different modalities, including telephonic interviews, and no children will be interviewed. Principles of ensuring privacy, confidentiality and consent would be followed. The purpose of the evidence collection will be clearly communicated before seeking information

- Assure that information and data is anonymous and stored confidentially.
- Acquire informed written/ recorded consent from the interviewed persons and ensure they have the choice to participate and it is voluntary, and the research outcomes are shared with them afterwards
- Availability of interviewers/people conducting the research from both genders.
- Need researchers to be well trained so that they can create comfortable interviewing spaces and build trust.
- Obtain signed form of code of conduct for ethical research in the UN system from research team and data collectors.

5. Description of assignment: (provide detail and in quantitative terms)

Key Tasks	Timeframe	Deliverables
1) Develop an inception report.	3 days	- Inception report in Arabic is drafted and presented to UNICEF for review, in reference to UNICEF draft proposal. This report will comprise of the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Methodology and outline of proposed tools. ▪ Ethical considerations. ▪ Selection of governorates and locations. ▪ Work plan with timeline and budget. ▪ Literature review of previous similar assessments, other countries good models and stakeholders' consultation.
2) Develop the research tools, pilot them and conduct on-line training for data collectors on the revised tools and collect data	12 days	- Assessment toolkit presented to UNICEF for review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment tools and consent forms ▪ Sampling methodology ▪ On-line training for data collection team ▪ Revised tools based on the pilot test ▪ Data collection (using telephone /other distance communication methods) and analysis methodology

3) Draft preliminary results report.	2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of preliminary results with focus on key issues emerging and proposed adjustments (if any). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data set ▪ Data entry and quality assurance plan. ▪ Revised data analysis plan
4) On-line consultative workshop on the draft report.	1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of the preliminary results to UNICEF and other stakeholders for review and feedback.
5) Preparation of the final comprehensive report.	7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final report (Arabic and English) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1-page executive summary ▪ 2 pages literature review ▪ 2 pages methodology ▪ 20 pages descriptive and analytical analysis (use of tables and figures should be used in a meaningful way and balanced with sound analysis) ▪ 1-page conclusion ▪ 2 pages Recommendations

5.2 Duration of Assignment: June – August 2020

6. Qualification and/or specialized knowledge/experience required for the assignment:

- Research agency specialized in social sciences or related technical field such as development, children or social research.
- Experience conducting rapid appraisals for producing situation assessments
- Understanding the legal framework and the relevant national policies and plans for and relating to early childhood development would be desirable.
- Experience with working with UN and NGOs will be an asset.
- Proficiency in English and Arabic technical writing skills.
- Experience with qualitative / quantitative research methodologies.
- Strong analytical and conceptual skills.
- Proven ability to keep to deadlines.

7. Criteria of assessment:

- Research agency specialization in social sciences or related technical field such as development, children or social research / experience conducting rapid appraisals for producing situation assessments (15 points)
- Qualifications and experience of research team (15 points)
- Technical proposal (40 points)
- Financial Proposal (30 points)

The proposal should include:

- Profile of consultancy firm
- Brief technical proposal including covering background, purpose and scope, methodology, workplan
- Financial proposal covering staff salaries (principal investigator(s), data collectors, data processing), materials and stationary costs.
- Name of researchers and brief presentation of their experience and qualification.

- Sample of research previously conducted by consultants.
8. Supervisor (must be staff member): Inas Hegazi – ECD Manager Management: M&E team.

