UNICEF Moldova

Terms of Reference


Location: Chisinau

Duration and timeline: 35 working days including 7 days within the country (within period of October 2019 – January 2020)

1. Background

Health and development status of children in Moldova remains sub-optimal in comparison to neighbouring countries. In particular young children and adolescents in Moldova are faced with the triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition, over-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies), requiring robust actions to strengthen the public health, education and social systems’ response. One-third of the children under five suffer from anaemia, more than half are subject to chronic helminthic infections and less than one-fifth are fed in line with the minimum diet requirements. One quarter of adolescents are overweight, another quarter is underweight and only one-third consume daily vegetables, fruits and milk. UNICEF’s Multi Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS 2012) revealed that 24% of the adolescent girls in the age group 15-19 years had anaemia and that only 41% of the households in Moldova use iodized salt in food preparation.

The nutritional status of preschool and school aged children has a profound impact on current and future health. A sustained healthy diet and healthy eating practices during this period have the potential to address nutritional deficits and linear-growth faltering generated during the first decade of life and may limit harmful behaviours contributing to the epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in adulthood. Investing in healthy nutrition brings triple dividends: better health for children and adolescents, improved well-being and productivity in their future adult life and reduced health risks for their children. Nutrient needs increase in adolescence to meet the demands of pubertal growth. Dietary habits and behaviours are influenced by numerous factors, including brain development and broader social-cultural and economic determinants in which adolescents live, eat, study and play.

A UNICEF-Price Waterhouse 2016 study of pre-schools in Moldova indicated that pre-schools in Moldova offer to some extent unbalanced and unsafe meals and the financing of the school meals is at a significantly lower level comparing to neighbouring Romania or Belarus. The findings of the study were corroborated by media reports about deficiencies in the running of pre-school canteens and the sub-optimal quality of offered meals. In 2016 Moldova revised the approach for preschool meals and

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1 Multiple Indicators Clusters Study (MICS), 2012 round and the Demographic and Health Study, 2005
2 HBSC research, Republic of Moldova, WHO 2014
3 A report card on adolescents. New York: UNICEF; 2012 (Progress for children, No. 10)
developed energy based and nutritional based recommendations for preschool meals, and an Instruction on organization of provision of meals in schools and pre-schools in 2018.

Adolescents in Moldova also face nutritional deficiencies, as well as overweight and obesity. A Health Behavior among School-age Children Survey (HBSC) conducted in 2014 indicated that every 8th teenager has an excess of body weight, every 5th teenager has a body mass deficit. Only one third of respondents (33%) indicated that they eat fruits daily and one fifth (21%) reported that they eat fruits once a week or less often. One third of adolescents indicated that they eat sweets every day and 10% indicated drinking soda, Cola and other soft drinks every day. In addition, 12% of the adolescents indicated being on a fasting diet, with girls being on a fasting diet twice as often as boys (16% vs 7%).

The current approaches to the provision, regulation, and improvement of preschool and school meals in the Republic of Moldova are scattered and do not ensure that school and preschool diets contribute to improving the nutritional status of children. The recent assessment of existing models of nutrition in preschools and schools in accordance with Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) methodology conducted with UNICEF Moldova support revealed that the existing regulatory framework related to nutrition in preschools, as well as model menus for preschools need revision to reach the nutritive and energetic needs of pre-school and school aged children. The existing national standard (physiological norms) is difficult to be interpreted (daily, weekly and monthly standard) and if followed contribute to excessive energetic intake and doesn’t ensure diversity of food in preschools and schools.

The proposed consultancy will review the existing regulatory framework related to Energy based and Nutrition based Guidelines and will adjust to the latest WHO/ FAO recommendation. Nutritional standards for preschool and schools as well as a list of potential menus for preschools and schools are expected to be developed based on above mentioned Guidelines. The Consultant is also expected to develop a School food adequacy standard that will contribute to the implementation of the Guideline provision into practice.

The proposed consultancy contributes to the National Programme on Nutrition 2014-2020 approved by Government of Moldova. One of the specific objectives of the program is to build by 2020 a healthy nutritional environment in 80% of the educational institutions, 70% of health institutions and 30% at workplace.

The proposed assignment is in line with the 2018-2022 Country Programme signed between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and UNICEF, and will support the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) and Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) to ensure provision of safe and balanced food in schools and preschools with the scope to improve the nutrition status and behaviours among pre-school and school aged children. UNICEF Moldova supports the Government in development of National Dietary Guidelines (nutrient based and food based) and adjustment of normative framework (food standards) for preschool and schools targeted to healthy nutrition needs in childhood and adolescence to prevent or reverse adverse health effects of overweight and inadequate eating habits.
1. **Purpose of the assignment**

The purpose of the consultancy is to provide technical assistance in development of National Dietary Nutrient and Food-based Guidelines for preschool and school aged children, Preschool and School Food Standards (nutrient and food based, in line with WHO/FAO standards), including menus aimed at improving the wellbeing of preschool and school aged children through healthy nutrition. Taking into consideration that optimal nutrition among children and adolescents requires coordination across multiple sectors, an inter-sectoral technical working group will be established, responsible for coordination, consultation and validation of the developed National Dietary Guidelines and adjusted Preschool and School Food Standards with representatives from the key stakeholders: Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and Ministry of Finance, National Agency Of Public Health and National Agency for Food Safety.

The duration of the contract is for 4 months, starting with October 2019.

2. **Objectives of the consultancy**

The focus of this consultancy will be on developing two national dietary guidelines for preschool and school aged children, as well as adjustment of Preschool and School Food Standards and menus for schools and preschools.

The guidelines will include all key elements, as presented below:

- **preschool/school community** (give recommendations on better engagement of parents and caregivers; community collaboration; local retailers and farmers; media and publicity);
- **preschool/school curricula** (with recommendations on life skills and educational materials);
- **preschool/school environment** (school and preschool meals, breakfast clubs, fruit, vegetable and milk subscription; vending machines);
- **preschool/school nutrition** (recommendation on preschool and school menus models as annexes to the guidelines; collaboration between schools and health services) and
- **recommendations** for healthy eating and active lifestyle for children and adolescents.

3. **Details of how the work should be delivered**

The contract is planned for five months, starting with October 2019. The consultant, in close consultation with UNICEF Programme staff, will develop activities according to the schedule below, totalling for 35 working days.

Taking into consideration that food and nutrition for preschool and school aged children requires coordinated actions across multiple sectors, the deliverables should be presented and consulted with the technical working group with various representation from key line agencies/ministries. Taking into consideration that validation process might take longer due to multiple sectors involvement in the coordination process, the consultant will actively participate in the meetings of the working group, will take minutes of the discussions and will respond to every comment and feedback of the documents presented to ensure mutual understanding and agreement.
## 4. Deliverables and delivery dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
<th>Tentative deadlines*</th>
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| 1.  | **Development of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children** |                                                                                                                                                                                                             | October - November 2019  
Total of 15 working days, including 3 working days within the country |
|     | Prepare Assignment Work Plan/ timetable and methodology                 | • Inception report (3-5 pages) and Work Plan with clear timelines and responsibilities                                                                                                                    | First week of October |
|     | Review and document good practices from global and regional level on existing of Nutrient based and Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children   | • Summary of existing practices  
• Concept and framework of the Nutrient and Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children in line with WHO/FAO standards   | Second week of October   |
|     | Validate Work Plan, methodology and Concept with Working Group and UNICEF CO | • WG meeting and follow up                                                                                                                  | Second week of October   |
|     | **Development of the first draft of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children** | • Draft of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children in line with WHO/FAO standards                                                                 | Third week of October   |
|     | **Validation of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children** | • WG meeting  
• Report on validation meeting  
• Feedback from WG included in the final version                                                                                                           | Fourth week of October   |
|     | **Submit final version of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children** | • Final version of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children                                                                                              | First week of November  |
### 2. Development of the National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children, including menus

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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| Drafting of the National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool children based on the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool, including recommended menus | November – December 2019  
Total of 15 working days, including 2 days within the country |
| Validation of the National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children | First week of December  
• WG meeting  
• Report on validation meeting  
• Feedback from WG included in the final version |
| Submit final version of the National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool children, including recommended menus | Second week of December  
• Final version of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool children, including recommended menus |

*Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.*

### 4. Final report including Executive Summary and Action Plan (or list of actions to be implemented by relevant sectors) for ensuring implementation of the developed Guidelines

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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| Final report including Executive Summary and Action Plan (or list of actions to be implemented by relevant sectors) for ensuring implementation of the developed Guidelines | Final Report including Executive Summary (max. 5 pages)  
PPT presentation presented to Working Group and UNICEF 5 days prior to the meeting  
Minutes of the validation meeting signed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.  
January  
Total 5 working days, including 2 working days in country |

### 5. Reporting requirements

The consultant must submit for approval the following major outputs. Each product will be shared with the Health Officer for endorsement prior to submission to the technical working group for validation and after incorporation of the inputs of working group on nutrition members:

- Inception report (maximum 5 pages) with Summary of existing practices and concept and framework of the Nutrient and Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children in line with WHO/FAO standards
- Draft of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children in line with WHO/FAO standards;
- Final version of the National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children;
• Draft of the National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children;
• Final version of the National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children, included recommended menus;

A final report that incorporates the main comments and recommendations from the guidelines and menus models for preschool and school-aged children with minutes from the technical working group meetings on consultation and validation processes.

The consultant will report to the Health Officer, who will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support so to achieve objectives of the consultancy, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to consultant’s performance and quality of work.

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the consultant shall be discussed and planned in consultation with UNICEF. The consultant is expected to deliver each component of the workplan electronically (in Word format) in English and in Romanian. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Health Officer.

6. Performance indicators for evaluation of results:
The performance of work will be evaluated based on the following indicators:

• Completion of tasks specified in ToR;
• Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables;
• Quality of work;
• Demonstration of high standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF and counterparts;

7. Qualifications and experience

This assignment requires strong technical and analytical skills in the area of food and nutrition, as well as good knowledge of the national policies, strategies, legal and institutional framework in the nutrition domain. Furthermore, the assignment requires strong communication, negotiation and cooperation skills.

Key expected qualifications are as follows:

• An advanced university degree in nutrition science, medicine, epidemiology, public health or a related field with sound knowledge of epidemiology and broad knowledge of nutrition, particularly in the area of nutrient requirements;
• At least 5 years of experience working in the area of nutrition domain or related field;
• Professional experience in food and nutrition policy documents development and implementation;
• Demonstrated ability to analyze scientific data and publications, and effectively transposing it in scientific and technical information clearly and concisely, particularly in writing;
• Analytical capacity and proven experience in conducting desk-review, research, and studies;
• Excellent command of English;
• Good knowledge of Romanian or Russian will be an advantage;

Other qualifications:
8. Content of technical proposal

- Relevant experience with similar type of assignments (max 300 words)
- Proposed approach and methodology (max 1500 words), including:
  - Timeline and milestones
  - Risk and mitigation measures
  - Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them
- Annex: At least 1-2 samples of previous work of similar deliverables in the area of nutrition (policy documents/guidelines/programs)

9. Content of financial proposal

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify the consultancy fee in USD, per day of work, requested for the tasks described in the Terms of Reference, as well as breakdown of international travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) costs if applicable (as specified in paragraph 13 of this ToR).

Other expenses directly related to the ToR assignments and deliverables such as: (translation/interpretation costs, local transportation etc.) may be included in the financial offer unless specified that UNICEF will cover them separately (see paragraph 14 and 15 below).

The final selection will be based on the principle of “best value for money” i.e. achieving desired outcome at the lowest possible fee.

If not provided by ToR and included in the Financial Offer, UNICEF will not reimburse costs not directly related to the assignment. This contract does not allow payment of off-hours, medical insurance, taxes, and sick leave.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/output is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.
10. Payment schedule

The payment will be linked to the following deliverables upon satisfactory completion and acceptance by UNICEF:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Proportion of payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inception report, including concept and framework of the Nutrient and Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children in line with WHO/FAO standards</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Nutrient based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Food based Dietary Guidelines for preschool and school aged children</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Report</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs are incomplete, not delivered for failure to meet deadlines.

11. Definition of supervisory arrangements

The consultant will work under the direct supervision of the Health Officer of UNICEF Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of each task, as per the schedule outlined above.

12. Work location and official travel involved

The current consultancy involves three in country missions. Prior to starting the assignment, the selected candidate must undertake the on-line BSAFE course (to be provided by UNICEF).

The consultant is responsible for any costs incurred to set up and maintain the proper work environment. UNICEF will not be responsible for operating costs, maintenance or any incidental cost associated with the use of the workplace.

When applicable: Consultant will make and pay for own international travel arrangements for arriving to Moldova including air tickets, visa costs, insurance, any taxes etc.

The travel shall be based on economy class travel, regardless of the length of travel, subject to exceptional approval of business class travel by the Head of Office, for example for medical reasons when certified by UN Medical Services in New York.

The daily subsistence allowance (DSA) should not exceed fees as promulgated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) for Moldova Country Office.

Travel costs not actually incurred due to travel mission cancellation, delays, contract termination or modification are subject to deduction from final contract amount.
13. Support provided by UNICEF

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support so to achieve objectives of the work, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to the performance and quality of work. UNICEF will provide an initial package of relevant documents and available research, and an initial list of relevant experts and counterparts to work with. UNICEF will also request relevant data – as agreed upon with the consultant – from relevant government counterparts.

14. Ethical considerations

The Consultant will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines7. The Contractor should be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Contractor should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Assessment, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The Contractor is allowed to use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

As per the DHR PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS, together with the Notification letter, the contractor will be sent the link on Agora containing UNICEF policies on Prohibiting and Combatting Fraud and Corruption; Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority and other relevant policies for their information and acknowledgment. The selected candidate must complete the applicable mandatory online courses on UNICEF’s learning platform prior to signature of contract. All certificates should be presented as part of the contract.

7 UNEG Guidelines http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/102