

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONTRACTORS

International institutional consultancy on supporting contemporary early childhood intervention model in two Montenegrin municipalities

Background and Context

The early childhood years are foundational for the development of all human beings and shape the trajectory of life. This is a period particularly important for children who are at risk of or experience developmental difficulties. Evidence shows that adequate support during these years, when brain development is very intensive and neural plasticity is greater, can help children with developmental difficulties improve levels of functioning and achieve their innate potential. It can also help prevent or ameliorate the impact of environmental risk factors, including extreme poverty, neglect and violence, that are known to adversely affect child development and increase the likelihood for developmental difficulties. In the longer run, early support can significantly improve quality of life of the child and his/her family and promote inclusion.

During the past decades, globally, efforts have intensified to strengthen and expand support to children with developmental difficulties and their families/caregivers. Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) systems and services have emerged as an important policy area to promote the development of infants and young children who are at risk of or are experiencing developmental difficulties and support the realization of their rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. There has been a significant shift in the understanding on how child development during the first years of life can be enhanced, which also informed a change in the philosophy and principles of ECI practice. Consequently, contemporary ECI practice builds on the understanding that family interaction patterns are critical for child outcomes, making services more family-centered rather than child-centered, aiming to provide parents and other significant adults in the child's life (like early years teachers, other caregivers) with skills, knowledge and confidence necessary for meeting the needs of the child and for providing everyday opportunities that promote learning and development.

According to the [Situation Analysis of Early Childhood Intervention in Montenegro in 2022](#) (ECI SitAn), ECI services in Montenegro are medical model based or evolving from the medical model towards contemporary ECI service provision, but **no contemporary ECI services are found at present**. The ECI system is fragmented and sector-based, and no ECI Strategic Plan, ECI Guidelines and Procedures, or ECI Service or Personnel Standards exist. These policy documents are essential to establishing a countrywide ECI system, to ensure high-quality ECI services for all children and families who need them. Also, no integrated and multisectoral ECI coordination system has been developed to plan the future expansion, improvement and financial projections required to create and administer the ECI system. As a result, there are issues with ECI service equity, workforce development, certification and accreditation, quality assurance and accountability. There is no universal child developmental monitoring, as a result of which many children with delays and disabilities are identified late. Substantial disparities also exist regarding service location, ethnicity, family income and types of ECI services. It is estimated that 10% to 15% children from 0 to 6 years require ECI services annually but less than half receive it. The study concludes that Montenegro needs a countrywide ECI system, universal developmental screening and referrals, a child tracking system, and to expand and improve the existing service providers, ensuring support to families in underserved municipalities and populations, especially Albanian, Roma and Egyptian families.

As part of the “EU and UNICEF for Early Childhood Development in Montenegro” Action (2020-2023), the Ministry of Health developed and adopted a national Early Childhood Development Strategy 2023-2027 which identifies strengthening ECI in Montenegro as a priority and includes a number of measures and actions to initiate the reform. Furthermore, as part of the same Action, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, UNICEF supported the piloting

of contemporary, transdisciplinary, family-centered, routine-based early intervention in two municipalities as demonstration sites, Bijelo Polje and Kotor, while some institutions in Podgorica (particularly Resource centre “Podgorica”) also undertook the training and piloted some elements of the approach. The pilots have been generating valuable learning based on which future scaling up can be based. The piloting has included mapping of local services and resources, training on child developmental monitoring and piloting of an internationally renowned developmental screening instrument, training on contemporary early intervention and implementation of contemporary early intervention under professional supervision. Furthermore, by the end of 2023 draft ECI Guidelines were created and submitted to the Ministry of Health for adoption as guideline of recommended clinical practice.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF Country Office in Montenegro will engage an international institute/agency/organization gathering experts in the field of contemporary, transdisciplinary, family-centered, routine-based early intervention in order to further support institutions piloting the approach, in particular in Kotor and Bijelo Polje as demonstration sites, and to support national level advocacy for future scaling up.

2. Objectives, Purpose & Expected Results

The purpose of the assignment is to enable families and children in Montenegro to benefit from timely and quality support for optimal early development by enhancing ECI practice in Montenegro in line with international standards and best practice.

The objective of the assignment is to assist the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and relevant institutions in Kotor and Bijelo Polje (primary health care centres, preschools, relevant social and child protection institutions), and the Resource Centre “Podgorica” to model contemporary, transdisciplinary, family-centered, routine-based early intervention based on contemporary child developmental monitoring, and thus provide a basis for future scale up at national level.

3. Description of the Assignment

The following tasks are expected to be completed:

1. Desk review and preparation for the field mission (remotely).
2. Facilitate a two hour briefing meeting with the Ministry of Health, National ECD Coordination Body and relevant institutions in Kotor and Bijelo Polje and Resource Centre “Podgorica” to take stock of progress achieved, share lessons learnt and plan for future scale up (face-to-face).
3. To, based on consultations with the two ECI teams, develop a plan of monthly supervisory meetings until the end of the year (open and thematic) and to, based on the plan, provide monthly supervisory support to the teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor (except in August). Short supervisory reports to be submitted to UNICEF and the respective teams as per template to be agreed (remotely).
4. Facilitate one-day horizontal supervision between the ECI teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor and Resource Centre “Podgorica” (face-to-face).
5. Facilitate a meeting with pediatricians and ECI teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor on child developmental monitoring (face-to-face).
6. Conduct three day training of relevant professionals in Bijelo Polje and Kotor and Resource Centre “Podgorica” (face to face) on contemporary early intervention strategies such as toilet training and communication skills for children who are not verbal (face-to-face).
7. Facilitate a two hour debriefing meeting with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and relevant institutions in Kotor and Bijelo Polje and

Resource Centre “Podgorica” to take stock of progress achieved, share lessons learnt and plan for future scale up (face-to-face).

8. Prepare final consultancy report for UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare including recommendations for next steps in the process of introducing and scaling up contemporary early intervention models (remotely).

Deliverables should be prepared in either English or Montenegrin language. UNICEF Office in Montenegro will secure translation when needed.

4. Deliverables, timelines, and payment schedule

Deliverables	Tentative deadlines	Tentative payment schedule
1. Two-hour briefing meeting with the Ministry of Health, National ECD Coordination Body and relevant institutions in Kotor and Bijelo Polje and Resource Centre “Podgorica” to take stock of progress achieved, share lessons learnt and plan for future scale up (face-to-face).	10 June 2024	50%
2. One-day horizontal supervision between the ECI teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor and Resource Centre “Podgorica” (face-to-face).	31 May 2024	
3. Plan of monthly supervisory meetings until the end of the year (open and thematic) agreed (remotely).	10 June 2024	
4. Monthly supervisory support to the teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor (remotely).	30 June 2024 31 July 2024	
5. Facilitate a meeting with pediatricians and ECI teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor on child developmental monitoring (face-to-face)	30 June 2024	
6. Conduct three day training of relevant professionals in Bijelo Polje and Kotor and Resource Centre “Podgorica” (face to face) on contemporary early intervention strategies including toilet training and communication skills for children who are not verbal (face-to-face).	30 September 2024	
7. Monthly supervisory support to the teams in Bijelo Polje and Kotor (remotely).	30 September 2024 31 October 2024 30 November 2024 15 December 2024	
8. Facilitate a two-hour debriefing meeting with the Ministry of Health, National ECD Coordination Body and relevant institutions in Kotor and Bijelo Polje and Resource Centre “Podgorica” to take stock of progress achieved, share lessons learnt and plan for future scale up (face-to-face).	14 July 2023	
9. Final consultancy report for UNICEF and the three ministries with recommendations	24 July 2023	

5. Travel

- Some tasks require presence in Montenegro while some meetings can be held online using experts' own online platform subscriptions.
- During the application process, the Technical and Financial proposals should outline required travel (duration and number of trips).
- Travel costs will be calculated based on economy class travel, regardless of the length of travel. Costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as promulgated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).
- The international team should arrange their own travel and accommodation.

6. Management and Organisation

- **Management:** The consultancy will be supervised by Early Childhood Development Officer. The Consultancy Agency should communicate with the Early Childhood Development Officer on a regular basis and share all deliverables as they become available for review and potential feedback.
- **Organization:** International Institutional Consultancy is required, meeting the criteria described below.
- **Recourse:** UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.
- **Schedule:** This assignment will commence on 15 May 2024.

7. Qualification Requirements

The Consultancy Agency team should consist of ECD/ECI professionals with the following requirements:

- All team members should hold advanced university degrees in child development, paediatrics, psychology, pedagogy, special pedagogy, early intervention or a related technical field.
- Each of the team members should have at least five years of progressive professional experience in the field of contemporary ECI including training other professionals to provide contemporary ECI.
- At least one team member should have professional experience in providing training on child developmental monitoring.
- At least one team member should have work experience in the Western Balkans.
- At least one team member should have previous work experience with UNICEF.
- Excellent command of both spoken and written English or Montenegrin.

8. Application procedure

The potential contractors are expected to submit a proposal based on these Terms of Reference. The proposal should consist of:

- i. **Technical Proposal including:**
 - a) Portfolio of the organisation/institution/agency with examples of previous work on similar projects and clients in the last 5 years at least;

- b) Title/designation of each team member including their CVs, clearly outlining how each of the team members fulfils the above requirements and role of each team member for the fulfilment of above tasks. One team member should be assigned as a team lead to facilitate communication with UNICEF;
- c) Description of the methodology and technical approach with a tentative work plan with the number of working days and timeframe in line with the ToRs;
- d) LRPS Form signed.

ii. **Price Proposal (Budget) including**

- a. Daily fee rate for each team member based on the number of working days included in the Technical Proposal.
- b. Estimated travel costs both international and in country travel. Daily subsistence allowance (DSA) will, where applicable, be paid up to a maximum of the official UN rate. (Reimbursement of travel costs / accommodation expenses will be based on actual expenses).
- c. Other costs if applicable.

The price, i.e. financial proposal shall indicate budget estimated in EUR.

8. Evaluation

1) Technical components (70 points)

ITEM	TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA	MAX OBTAINABLE POINTS
1	Overall Response - the understanding of the assignment by the proposer and the alignment of the proposal submitted with the ToR	
1.1	• Completeness of response	3
1.2	• Overall concord between TOR/needs and proposal	3
2	Company and Key Personnel	
2.1	• Range and depth of organizational experience with similar assignment	12
2.2	• Samples of previous work, number of customers, size of projects	5
2.3	• Key personnel: relevant experience and qualifications of the proposed team for the assignment	20
3	Company policies	
3.1.	• Company policy on Child labor, Safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (articulate policies for the protection & safeguarding of children and prevention of PSEA)	3
3.2.	• Gender component: At least 1 female in the management structure or ownership of the company	2
3.3.	• Workplace policies on disabilities	2
4.	Proposed Methodology and Approach	
4.1	• Methodology and technical approach outline	15
4.2	• Tentative work plan	5

TOTAL TECHNICAL SCORE		70
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Minimum technical score: 70% of 70 points = 49 points

2) Financial component (total of 30 points)

- Technical proposal evaluation. Proposals passing the minimum technical pass score (49 points-70% of the maximum points obtainable for technical proposal) will continue into the Financial proposal evaluation.
- Financial proposal evaluation. The lowest price proposal will be awarded the full score assigned to the commercial proposal.
- Recommendation. The recommendation for award of contract will be based on best combination of technical and financial score.
- Final award and contracts. Based on verified nominations and final scores, contract negotiations could be initiated with one or more successful Proposers.
- The UNICEF evaluation team will select the Proposal which is of high quality, clear and meets the stated requirements and offers the best combination of technical and financial score.