1. Background and Context

The COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time. It is also a human, economic and social crisis. Countries around the world are being challenged by increasing demand for health care of people with COVID-19, compounded by fear, stigma, misinformation and limitations on movement that disrupt the delivery of essential services.

Maintaining population trust in the capacity of the public health system to safely meet essential needs and to control infection risk in various settings is key to ensuring appropriate care-seeking behaviour and adherence to public health advice. Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) is an essential component of health emergency preparedness and response. Regular and proactive communication with the public and at-risk populations can help to avoid situations where the virus is more likely to spread, as well as to reduce stigma, build trust and increase social support and access to basic needs for affected people and their families.

While further evidence is needed about the main vectors for virus transmission in Montenegro, fatigue about the RCCE messaging and loss of trust in public institutions is a widespread phenomenon that is driving non-adherence to measures. This may also lead to negative attitudes vis-à-vis the COVID-19 vaccine that could hinder vaccine uptake. Public opinion surveys need to be conducted on a regular basis to measure inhabitants’ attitudes and practices in the light of the persisting epidemic, which is resulting, across the globe, in fatigue with respect to adherence with the recommended measures.

Another challenge is that the COVID-19 outbreak and response has been accompanied by an “infodemic”: an overabundance of information from various sources — some accurate and some not — that makes it hard for people to decide which is a trustworthy source of information. The fight against disinformation is a joint effort involving all stakeholders encouraging them to promote authoritative sources of information, as well as demote content that is fact-checked as false or misleading.

All response activities should be conducted in a participatory, community-based way that are informed and continually optimized according to community feedback to detect and respond to concerns, rumors and misinformation. Changes in the response interventions should be developed based on population’s perspective of the public health measures. Responsive, empathic, transparent and consistent messaging in local languages through trusted channels of communication, using community-based networks and key influencers and building capacity of local entities is essential to establish authority and trust.

The aim of the perception surveys is to examine the psychological and behavioral responses of the community during the COVID-19 outbreak. Considering the importance of host behavior in mitigating transmission and the vision to inform policy formation in a timely manner, these surveys aim to examine risk perceptions and behavioral responses of the general community during the COVID-19 epidemic. Considering the rapid development of the epidemic during the survey period and the potential variability in the adoption of preventive measures and acceptance of COVID-19 vaccine among citizens, this study also examines the temporal changes in anxiety, the factors associated with adoption of preventive measures, acceptance of vaccine, and their sources of information gathering.
2. **Purpose and Objective**

The purpose of the consultancy is to provide technical assistance in conducting nationally representative perception surveys on risk awareness and perceptions among the population regarding COVID-19. Datasets obtained from such surveys will serve for monitoring and will inform the national campaigns in response to COVID-19 pandemic and allow quick evidence-based decision making. The aim of such formative researches is to understand the country’s risk perception and the social and cultural context of populations at risk, to predict their acceptance of guidance issued by health authorities, as well as perceptions of citizens on COVID-19 vaccine.

Surveys should provide information on the following issues:

- How well target audience is informed about coronavirus;
- Level of threat that coronavirus poses to target audience;
- Rumors and misinformation;
- Positive and negative attitudes likely to influence prevention and control;
- Where target audiences obtain health information and whom they trust;
- Media, institutions and networks available for message dissemination;
- Attitudes towards vaccines, etc.

If deemed necessary, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews shall be conducted (via phone, online, face-to-face) to engage with people in order to better understand their views, values, fears and concerns on specific topics concerning COVID-19 and supplement the use of survey questionnaires.

3. **Methodology and Technical Approach**

A detailed work plan with the time frame will be developed by the consultant organization and agreed with UNICEF Communication for Development Officer.

The methodology should cover the following items (non-exhaustive list):

- Location
- Method of data collection
- Type of samples
- Stratification
- Sample size

Having in mind that the Government introduced social distancing measures to prevent/contain virus transmission, researches must be conducted via phone or online in order to respect the legal obligations introduced in Montenegro in relation to COVID-19.

**Sample definition:** National representative survey with 800 to 1000 respondents, depending on the type of the survey.

**Questionnaire:** The questionnaire should cover the following areas (non-exhaustive list):

- Respondent characteristics (respondents to be asked about their demographics (including sex, age, living district, education attainment, household income);
• Risk perception (respondents to be asked about their perceived susceptibility and perceived severity of COVID-19);
• Information exposure (respondents to be asked about the sources from which they obtained information about COVID-19, and how much they trust those sources);
• Preventive measures (respondents to be asked whether they performed precautionary measures and what their perceived efficacy of those measures are);
• Attitudes towards vaccines (including acceptance of COVID-19 vaccine, as well as attitudes towards vaccines in general);

Questions will be defined depending on the situation in the country and needs for data collection on specific topics/issues.

Analyses:

• Data will be presented immediately with tables including disaggregated data according to gender, different age groups, rural and urban areas, level of education, socio-economic status, etc.

**Ethical considerations**

The consulting agency is required to clearly identify any potential ethical issue, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the research/data collection process in their proposal. UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis can be found at: [https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF](https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF) and should be consistently applied throughout the research process. The procedure contains the minimum standards and required procedures for research, evaluation and data collection and analysis undertaken or commissioned by UNICEF (including activities undertaken by individual and institutional contractors, and partners) involving human subjects or the analysis of sensitive secondary data.

4. **Activities and Tasks**

• Finalization of the research design – agreement on the details regarding the questionnaires for the quantitative research. If needed, details regarding the questionnaire for the qualitative research should be agreed depending on the needs of UNICEF;
• Submission of final questionnaires in English and Montenegrin;
• Submission of focus group guidelines in English and Montenegrin, only if requested by UNICEF;
• Data collection;
• Data analysis;
• Making a technical report in English and Montenegrin for UNICEF Montenegro on the survey results – this report should also include disaggregated data according to age, gender, socio-economic status, geographical area, etc.;
• Making a power point presentation on the key findings of the research in English and Montenegrin for UNICEF Montenegro;
• Submitting technical reports and data sets to UNICEF Montenegro.
5. **Deliverables and Timeframe**

- Delivering validated surveys dataset upon availability;
- Report and a power point presentation in English and Montenegrin on the results of the researches submitted to UNICEF Montenegro as soon as possible after each rolling survey – 8 surveys in total (by December 15, 2021).

Approximately, one survey should be conducted per month. First two surveys to be conducted by June 30, 2021. Next three surveys to be conducted by September 30, 2021. The last three surveys to be conducted by December 15, 2021.

**Duration:** 8 and a half months (April 15 – December 31, 2021) with a possibility of extension subject to COVID-19 situation development.

6. **Management and Organisation**

The consultant organization will be supervised by the UNICEF Communication for Development Officer.

The evaluation of the contractor(s)’ performance will be based on:

- Quality of produced outputs;
- Compliance with the established timelines;
- Compliance with ethical UNICEF standards related to reporting on children;
- Responsibility and communication.

Organization: Institutional (international or national) consultancy is required for this consultancy.

Schedule: This assignment is expected to commence by 15 April 2021 and end on 31 December 2021.

7. **Qualifications and Background**

The assignment is expected to be undertaken by an institution/company to produce the expected results. The potential contractors are expected to submit a proposal/expression of interests based on these Terms of Reference.

The institution must have full capacity to carry out data collection activities in Montenegro, and extensive experience in research on issues pertaining to public awareness, marketing, etc. Specific requirements are:

- Strong track record in conducting perception surveys, and producing public awareness/opinion research and reports;
- Demonstrated capacity to communicate research findings to diverse audiences;
- Previous work with UNICEF or other development agencies in a similar area is desirable.
8. Content of proposal

The potential contractors are expected to submit a proposal (Technical and Financial) based on these Terms of Reference.

The proposal should consist of:

✓ **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**, which should include:

- Title/Designation of each team member on the project and their CVs
- Experience in working on similar project and assignment – List all similar projects they worked on and their roles on those projects
- Project implementation and work plan showing the detailed sequence and timeline for each activity and days necessary for each proposed team member
- Quality assurance mechanism and risk mitigation measures put in place

b) **Detailed description of the methodology and technical approach;**

c) **Tentative work plan with number of days, timeframe and deadlines for deliverables**

d) **Evidence about the two to three similar assignments** containing the following information:

- Name of Client
- Title of the Project
- Year and duration of the project
- Scope of the Projects/Requirements
- Proposed Solutions and Outcome – include visuals, web-links, etc.
- Team members on each of the project and their specific roles
- Project timelines (start and end date year, and any other information necessary)
- Reference /Contact person details

e) **Supplier Profile Form**

✓ **Financial Proposal (Budget):**

- Price for quantitative monthly survey with general population – per survey
- Price for quantitative survey with general population – ad hoc
- Price for qualitative survey (Focus group discussions) – per survey
- Price for qualitative survey (In-depth interviews) – per survey
- Price for Omnibus research – in minutes

The financial proposal shall indicate budget estimated in EUR.
9. Proposal evaluation

Each proposal will be evaluated against a weight allocation of 70 for the technical proposal and 30 for the commercial (financial) proposal. The total maximum obtainable points is 100.

The proposal will be evaluated as follows:

1. **Technical components (total of 70 points)**
   - Professional profile - 20
   - Proposed Methodology and Approach – 35
   - Quality of Personnel and Suitability for the assignment - 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Proposal Evaluation Form</th>
<th>Max. Points Obtainable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional profile</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Evidence of relevant experience in similar type of research/surveys</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proposed methodology and Approach</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of proposed methodology and technical approach</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quality of Personnel and Suitability for the assignment</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Organizational and technical capacity of the applicant</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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1 Financial offer will be reviewed only if Technical proposal meets minimum required quality standards.
10. Budget and Remuneration

Consultancy fee

Proposals are invited based on these Terms of Reference

Payment schedule

The payments will be made upon successful completion of the deliverables and submission of invoices, by following payment schedule:

- 30% upon delivery of first two surveys (June 30, 2021)
- 30% upon delivery of next three surveys (September 30, 2021)
- 40% upon delivery of all eight surveys (December 15, 2021)

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.

11. Remarks

- UNICEF Montenegro Office holds copyrights for all reports. The documents (including raw materials, etc.) may not be reproduced, distributed or published without the written permission from UNICEF.
- All personal data should be accessible to team members, but no one else. The consultants need to set up secure systems (a) to ensure that other staff within their institutions cannot access their data via the shared staff drives, and (b) to ensure secure data transfer between institutions. Cloud based storage with limited sharing rights could be considered in this instance. Different personal data files need to be link-able, they need to be held separately so that they can only be linked purposely, by researchers who are authorised to do so. There is also a need to ensure that data cannot be removed from secure systems in ways that might compromise data security.
- UNICEF Montenegro Office will share with the selected consultants all the relevant materials it has and provide required expertise.
- UNICEF Montenegro Office will review and provide feedback on reports prepared by consultants.
- All information from produced reports cannot be shared with the media without the written approval of UNICEF Montenegro Office.