

Terms of Reference

Title:	<i>National Iodine Deficiency Survey in Tajikistan</i>
Consultancy Mode:	<i>National</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>International</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Type of Contract:	<i>Consultant</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Individual Contractor</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Institutional</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mode of Selection:	<i>Competitive</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Single Source</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
Location	<i>Dushanbe, Tajikistan</i>
Duration of Contract:	<i>5 months (May – September 2021)</i>

1. Background

Tajikistan has high malnutrition rate in the Central Asia. Despite improvements over the last decade, undernutrition in Tajikistan remains a significant public health problem. In response, major efforts have been made by the Government and various donors through implementation of nutrition specific interventions such as promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, timely introduction of complementary feeding, salt iodization, management of acute malnutrition, and Vitamin A and micronutrient powder distribution. However, the 2017 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) identified that 21 percent of children under 5 years old are stunted, 6 percent are wasted, and 8 percent are underweight.

According to the 2016 Tajikistan Micronutrient Status Survey, the national median urinary iodine concentration (MUIC) for children 6-59 months and women of reproductive age (87.5 µg/L and 75 µg/L, respectively) was below the threshold value of 100 µg/L. For both groups, iodine concentration had fallen substantially since 2009. 41% of children were found to be anemic with around two in five children suffering from vitamin A deficiency (37.0%).

The nutrition surveillance to track the nutritional status of population on a real time basis does not exist in Tajikistan. Health management information system also does not capture many of the key international indicators for monitoring the nutritional status of women and children. When it comes to the prevalence data for iodine deficiency (IDD) in particular, the 2016 Micronutrient Status survey is the only official information source available at this moment. In order to determine the current prevalence of iodine deficiencies, compare it with 2016 results for trend analysis, and identify any regional disparities, there is a pressing need to conduct a nationwide IDD survey as early as possible. This will be a nationally owned survey, and the updated official data from the proposed survey will guide the evidence-based decision-making and programme design to improve nutrition status of children and women. The survey can also provide baseline values for IDD indicator to measure the progress of the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 as well as its medium-term plan.

2. Purpose and specific objectives

The IDD Survey in Tajikistan aims to assess iodine deficiencies (urinary status) of children and women, determine risk factors for deficiencies, and compare the findings with the 2016 survey. It will be a nationally representative survey intended to obtain valid and reliable data on levels of iodine deficiency of children 6-59 months of age and women of reproductive age (15-49 years).

3. Scope of the review (Description of the assignment)

The proposed consultancy aims to assist the Government of Tajikistan in conducting an IDD survey in 2021, and therefore the contracted international institution is expected to provide the following technical assistance:

- Proposing and finalizing the survey methodologies, including plan for data collection and analysis, data collection instruments, and the entire work plan with timeframe;
- Training of a survey team, who will be engaged in data collection, supervision;
- Data analysis/synthesis and report writing; and
- Presentation and dissemination of the survey outcomes.

It should be noted that the MOHSPP and UNICEF will also engage a local research institute that will be responsible for data collection.

4. Specific objectives:

The contracted international institution will be responsible for the tasks as stipulated below:

1. Conduct a brief literature review. The desk review will make use of available study and evaluation reports including nutrition information, such as TjDHS 2017 and Micronutrient Status Survey 2016, national reports and strategies on nutrition, and administrative data / statistics from Health Management Information System (HMIS).
2. Facilitate the implementation of all preparatory activities and development of necessary documents for conducting a survey. This will include the finalization of sampling procedures, the survey methodology and protocols, including development of questionnaire, plan for data collection and analysis, data collection instruments, and the entire work plan with timeframe. The research protocols will ensure that the data collected will be unbiased. Before finalization, pilot-testing of the data collection instruments will be done.
3. Assist the local research institute in selection of interviewers and supervisors. Prepare and facilitate the training of interviewers and supervisors on data collection.
4. Supervise data collection, data entry and cleaning, biological sample collection and analyses for quality assurance. Share complete datasets with UNICEF in CSV and SPSS file formats.
5. Conduct data analysis, synthesis of the results, and report writing, with full engagement of the local research institute, MOHSPP, and UNICEF, and provide necessary technical assistance and capacity building support throughout this process.
6. Share a draft with UNICEF Country Office for review and feedback. Supplemental analysis based on feedback from UNICEF country office should be conducted and final report should be produced incorporating all the comments and feedback.
7. Serve as a resource person and presenter of the survey results during the launching event in June 2021. Assist in facilitating the discussions to develop recommendations and future actions.

Throughout the process, the contracted international institution will work closely with the MOHSPPP and the local research institute with a view to building their institutional capacity to enable the independent undertaking of a similar survey in future.

For quality assurance and ensuring the full national ownership of the study process and results, the steering committee composed of MOHSPPP officials / experts, UNICEF staff in charge of nutrition and monitoring and evaluation, and other relevant development partners, will be established to provide oversight of the study, validate the findings and recommendations, and disseminate them to wider stakeholders.

5. Deliverables and payment schedule

No	Deliverables	Deadline	Payment Schedule
1	Inception report, elaborating ethical consideration and the survey methodology,	5 May 2021	40% upon UNICEF

	including sample size, development of relevant and applicable data collection instruments (questionnaires, selection of variables, etc.,) which are pretested, and the work plan		approval of inception report
2	Debriefing with UNICEF, MOHSPP and the local research institute	8 May 2021	60% upon completion of the entire assignment
3	Training of the survey team on data collection (agenda, material and actual facilitation)	8-12 May 2021	
4	Finalization of data collection instruments, including questionnaires, incorporating the pre-testing results	15 May 2021	
5	Field data collection	15 May – 28 May 2021	
6	Data entry/cleaning, Data analysis, and report writing through participatory process, involving relevant stakeholders	1 June – 20 June 2021	
7	Submission of the draft report, elaborating the research findings and recommendations and presentation(ppt) of key findings	15 July 2021	
8	Final report, incorporating feedback and comments from UNICEF and government stakeholders	30 July 2021	
9	Presentation of the survey outcomes at launching event	10 August 2021	
10	All datasets, cleaned, in electronic format	10 August 2021	

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.

Due to COVID19, the work and deliverables are subject to change. Consultancy company need to be flexible to adjust to any unforeseen adjustments that might occur during the implementation.

6. Methodology

The 2021 IDD survey is expected to follow the similar methodology as 2016 micronutrient survey for comparability purposes. In 2016 survey, a total of 4,294 subjects (2,145 children 6 to 59 months and 2,149 women of childbearing age) were sampled, and two-stage cluster sampling methodology with proportional to the population size of the primary sampling unit were used. The data were collected from all five geographical areas – Khatlon Oblast, Rayons of Republic Subordination (RRS), Sughd Oblast, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), and Dushanbe. Urine were collected from each study participant. Samples were further analysed using ELIS/EQIP testing in the laboratory facilities in Dushanbe. The minimum list of core indicators against which the proposed study should collect data is provided in Annex 1.

7. Ethical considerations

The review will be guided by UNEG Ethical Guidelines¹ and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards². Should children be involved in the data collection or otherwise, ethical clearance should be sought by the review team. The common guiding principles will be used to ensure ethical safety during the review process:

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Informed consent
- Harm and benefits
- Conflict of interest

The reviewers will explain to the participants the purpose and use of the review; they will also make it explicitly clear to the participants that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw at any moment. Throughout the process, the reviewers should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders.

8. Management and supervision

The contracted international institution will report to Nutrition Specialist of UNICEF Tajikistan, under the overall supervision of Chief, Child Survival of UNICEF Tajikistan. The international institution should work collaboratively and communicate clearly with UNICEF and MOHSPPP and local research company. This includes:

- Working in a collaborative, respectful, and sensitive manner with survey participants;
- Maintaining clear, ongoing communication with UNICEF team throughout the survey;
- Participating in regular team meetings with the key stakeholders.

The performance evaluation shall be completed based on the timely submission of the deliverables, accuracy and quality of the deliverables.

9. Reporting requirements

The consultant should provide following list of documents:

- Inception Report, elaborating ethical consideration and the survey methodology, including development of relevant and applicable data collection instruments (questionnaires, selection of variables, etc.)
- Draft and Final Report
- Questionnaire
- Methodology of sampling procedure
- Research protocol
- Training agenda and material (Power Point presentations)
- All datasets, cleaned, in electronic format
- Presentation material including simple fact sheets

10. Qualification requirements/specialised knowledge/experience required to complete the task

¹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

² UNICEF PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS, April 2015

All the interested international institutions with prior experience in conducting nutrition survey, particularly IDD status survey, are invited to submit technical and financial proposals.

- Extensive experience (at least 10 years) in the administration of large nutrition related household surveys.
- The team members should be fluent in spoken and written English. Knowledge of Russian/Tajik will be an added advantage.
- Excellent reporting and presentation skills. Must be familiar with Statistical Packages and all relevant computer applications in general.

Request for submission

- A technical proposal with proposed methodology/approach to managing the project, showing understanding of tasks and work plan (no price information should be contained in the technical proposal);
- A copy of the organization profile;
- The proposed technical team curriculum vitae (CV);
- A sample of previous work undertaken in the last two years;
- Financial proposal (separate envelope).

11. Evaluation process and methods

The evaluation methodology is based on a highest combined score (based on the 70% technical offer and 30% price weight distribution).

Each interested institution is requested to submit in a one page brief a proposed approach for such assignment along with a copy of the organization profile, the proposed technical team curriculum vitae, expected budget as well as a sample of previous work undertaken in the last two years.

After the opening, each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its financial value price. The proposal with the best overall value, composed of technical merit and price, will be recommended for approval. UNICEF will set up an evaluation panel composed of technical and procurement staff and their conclusions will be forwarded to the internal UNICEF Contracts Review Committee or other relevant approving authority. The evaluation panel will first evaluate each response for compliance with the requirements of this Terms of Reference. Responses deemed not to meet all of the mandatory requirements will be considered non-compliant and rejected at this stage without further consideration. Failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions contained in these Terms of Reference, including provision of all required information, may result in a response or proposal being disqualified from further consideration.

The overall weighting between technical and price evaluation will be based on the predefined criteria. The technical component will account for 70% of the total points allocated and the financial component (commercial evaluation) will account for 30% of the total points allocated.

Technical evaluation:

The proposals will be evaluated against the following technical criteria:

Item	Technical Criteria/Qualifications	Max. Points
1	Overall Response	5
1.1	Completeness of the proposal and responsiveness to the TOR (5 pts)	
2	Capability and Key Personnel	35
2.1	Extensive experience (at least 10 years) in the administration of large nutrition related household surveys (15 pts)	

2.2	The team members should be fluent in spoken and written English. Knowledge of Russian/Tajik will be an added advantage (10 pts)	
2.3	Excellent reporting and presentation skills. Must be familiar with Statistical Package and all relevant computer applications in general (10 pts)	
3	Proposed Methodology and Approach	30
3.1	Quality of the proposed methodology, detailed timeline, consultations, data collection, analysis methods and presentation. The proposal should detail the proposed approaches based on the TOR requirements (20 pts)	
3.2	Assessment of key considerations relevant to the research, ethical concerns, potential risks and threats, and proposed mitigation plans (10 pts)	
	Total Technical Score	70

Only Proposers obtaining a minimum of 49 points in Technical Criteria evaluation will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Commercial evaluation:

The price/cost of each of the technically compliant proposals shall be considered only after evaluation of the above technical criteria. A maximum 30 point assigned to the financial proposal will be allocated to the lowest financial proposal. All other price proposals will receive scores in inverse proportion according to the following formula:

Score for price proposal A = (Maximum score for price proposal * Price of lowest priced proposal)/Price of proposal A.

As a result of the financial evaluation, the points of each proposal will be taken into further consideration in the final evaluation.

The bidders should ensure that all pricing information is provided in accordance with the following:

- The currency of the proposal shall be in USD for international companies and invoicing must be in the same currency.
- All prices/rates quoted must be exclusive of all taxes as UNICEF is a tax-exempt organization.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Any request for information or question should be forwarded to dushanbe@unicef.org