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| **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CONSULTANCY** | |
| Title: Consultancy to conduct operational research (OR) on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) interventions to reduce teenage pregnancies | |
| **Hiring Office:** | UNFPA Malawi office |
| **1. Introduction** | Malawi’s population and housing census (2018) records a population of 17.5 million and an estimated 19.8 million in 2023. The total fertility rate stands at 4.2 children per woman. The population is youthful with 26 percent being adolescents aged 10-19 years. Malawi’s adolescent birth rate remains unacceptably high, with an estimated 136 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 for 2015-16, ranking among the highest in Africa. In Malawi, three out of ten girls 15-19 are giving birth, being a silent obstacle to gender equality for girls. Early pregnancy is both cause and consequence of child marriage and early union, sexual gender-based violence, and limited life projects for girls. Early pregnancy multiplies the risks to girls’ health, increasing the likelihood of complications such as obstetric fistula, or death from pregnancy-related causes.  Early sexual activity is high in Malawi. Around 15% of young women and 18 percent of young men (aged 15-24) report having sex before age 15. Unintended pregnancy among girls in school poses a formidable social and development challenge. School progression is curtailed, and the affected individual girl often experiences societal stigma, mental stress, ill-health consequences in the short term, disability, low status in society, and poverty in the long term.  The introduction of a Life Skills /Age Appropriate sexuality education program in schools is among the government’s efforts to improve knowledge of the risks of unsafe sex and mitigate the consequences. Poor sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including HIV infections, place a heavy strain on health systems and undermines Malawi’s efforts towards the achievement of Malawi's 2063 vision and sustainable development.  The UN joint programme on girls’ education was launched in 2014 with support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, to address multiple socio-economic, cultural, health, nutrition, and gender issues that negatively affect education, especially of the girl child in Malawi, through a holistic and human-rights-based approach. The program is a collaborative effort by the government of Malawi with technical support from three United Nations agencies (WFP, UNICEF, and UNFPA).  The UN JPGE had its first phase from 2014-2017 (JPGE I - Improving access and quality of education for girls in Malawi). The second phase (JPGE II - Poverty Reduction through improved Quality Education and Basic life skills for and Out of School Adolescent Girls in Malawi) started in 2018 and ended in December 2020. While the first phase focused on building and piloting a multi-sectoral model to improve girls’ education, the second phase focused on expanding the model and most importantly placed emphasis on strengthening the role of the government in the coordination and implementation of the program.  The Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) is in its third Phase (2021 – 2024) aiming at – Ensuring the realization of girls’ and boys’ rights to quality, inclusive, and equitable education and life skills, and is implemented in 199 schools in the four districts of Dedza, Kasungu, Mangochi, and Salima. The purpose of the JPGE III is to strengthen and consolidate the gains made in the previous phases through its multi-sectoral approach to address barriers to access to quality education for girls and boys and then go further. The third phase recognizes the need to strengthen the focus on the quality of learning and to ensure inclusive and equitable access to education while promoting sustainable solutions. It also adopts a more gender transformative approach, maintaining a focus on girls but ensuring the needs of boys are also addressed and that they are actively engaged so they can be champions in promoting gender equality.  The three key outcome areas of the JPGE III are:  1) Increased access to quality and inclusive education by girls, boys, and adolescents (especially the most vulnerable) delivered through integrated services in a safe and gender-transformative school, that enhances learning outcomes;  2) Increased access to complementary alternative learning and life skills and integrated services by girls and boys out of school and;  3) Increased investment and support for education, life skills, health, and nutrition of children and adolescents in and out of school by communities, parents, and education stakeholders.  Under the JPGE program, Outcome 2 Output 2.1 aims at ensuring that out-of-school children and adolescents are provided with alternative learning and have the opportunity to access integrated services.  Efforts/ interventions have been implemented. However teenage pregnancies seem to continue to take place within and out of school girls. Therefore, - the UNFPA would like to examine the effectiveness of the adolescent’s SRHR interventions while closely monitoring the patterns of early and unintended pregnancies, as well as child marriages, within JPGE schools and communities.  At the same time, it is imperative to assess key interventions targeting reducing teenage pregnancies not only in JPGE programme but also other projects and programmes in the target districts. Therefore, this operational research has a scope of assessing key interventions which designed to contribute to reduction in teenage pregnancies in target areas, in order to come up with more comprehensive analysis.  The Ministry of Education of the Malawi Government, in collaboration with the UNFPA, is seeking to recruit a consultancy institution to carry out operational research for the JPGE III-SRHR program. |
| **2. Purpose and Objectives** | The primary goal of this study is to generate evidence to assess and scale up effective interventions to increase adolescents’ agency, access, and utilization of SRHR information and services and ultimately reduce teenage marriages and pregnancies in the targeted areas. It is expected that the evidence generated could be used to inform policy and programme development to advance adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights and improve their well-being. The key objectives of the operational research are as below:   1. Assess the relevance and effectiveness of SRHR interventions in reducing teenage pregnancies amongst girls in school and out of school in the target areas; 2. Conduct an analysis of the YFHS service delivery uptake and analyze the trend on available routine data on s adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, and GBV in the target area; 3. Enhance understanding and documentation of best approaches and best practices to draw key recommendations for strengthening adolescent and youth programs. |
| **3. Scope of work**  **(Description of services, activities, or outputs)** | **The scope of the operation research is as follows:**  **Geographic scope:** This research will be conducted in sampled schools from 199 JPG-targeted schools and communities in Dedza Mangochi, Kasungu, and Salima districts.  **Temporal scope:** 2021-2023  **Proposed research questions:**  Q1. To what extent the SRHR interventions were relevant and effective in reducing teenage pregnancies in the target areas?  Q1-1. What are the key interventions (approaches) that have been implemented in target areas, by various partners, not only JPGE? What are their implementation modality and entry point (health facility, school, community, etc.)?  Q2. To what extent has CSE delivered age-appropriate and in line with the life-skills curriculum?  Q3. What has been the trend in adolescent pregnancies, child marriage and GBV in targeted areas?  Q3-1. If there is an increased trend in adolescent pregnancy in the targeted areas, why has it increased and what are the key contributing factors to that trend?  Q3-2. If there is a decreasing or continuing trend in adolescent pregnancy in the targeted areas, what have been the key contributing and success factors to that trend?  Q4. What are the best approaches to contribute to the progress identified?  Q4-1. What are the approaches that contribute to lack of progress? What are the key challenges faced across various SRHR interventions in target areas?  Q5. What are the key recommendations based on lessons learned (both operational and programmatic)?  Note that the key questions can be further refined in consultation with key stakeholders during the design stage.  **Proposed Methodology of the Operational Research**  A recruited institution is expected to lead the design and implementation of the operation research framework liaising with the UNFPA team, and leading data collection (including training and development of protocols and instruments necessary to operationalize the research).  The selected institution is also expected to develop a detailed research methodology including a research strategy and analysis for discussion with UNFPA. It is expected a mixed- method approach including desk review, quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis of secondary data. The a comprehensive desk-based review will include existing ASRHR, Youth, and Gender. Once the study arms (proposed methodology) have been agreed upon with UNFPA, the recruited institution will undertake the exercise.  The institution will develop a research protocol and template for data collection, analysis, and documentation to be undertaken in the four districts. The institution is also expected to elaborate on the methodology that will be employed, including appropriate sampling and targeting of areas and individuals who were exposed to the project interventions. One of the methodologies that could be considered is the “control” or “non-intervention” group comparison to the “intervention” group, but not limited to. It can also be considered to follow a socio-ecological model for the analysis and findings. The research methodology will include an efficient collection of the data necessary for the research, consolidation, and analysis of the data, validation/triangulation of findings, and effective dissemination of the research results.  **Expected outputs and deliverables**   * **Design phase**   + Study work plan and inception report (with key methodology, and indicators to be considered for the operation research, metadata of indicators, including the methodologies for data collection and analysis and draft outline of the final report)   + Presentation slide deck of the inception report for the project stakeholder group’s validation (as relevant)   + Develop and submit the research protocol to the ethical committee (level of submission will be determined later) * **Field phase**   + Data collection and field visit plan   + Recruitment of the study participants   + Field work implementation   + Quarterly reports on the progress of the data collected   + Quarterly presentations slide on the progress of the OR   + Preliminary findings report at the end of the field phase * **Reporting and dissemination phase**   + Draft final report with the presentation slide deck   + Validation workshop conducted   + Final report which is formatted, organized and designed to professional quality (report must include a set of recommendations on project monitoring during the project implementation)   + Operational research brief fully formatted and designed to the professional quality (no more than 6 pages)   + A final presentation deck, summarizing the key research findings in user-friendly and visualized aids   + All quantitative and qualitative data sets, do files and transcripts   **General Terms and Conditions**  All reports and documents prepared during the assignment shall be treated as property of UNFPA Malawi CO. The reports/documents or any part, therefore, cannot be sold, used and/or reproduced in any manner without prior written approval of UNFPA Malawi CO. In the event the consultancy institution requires additional time to complete the contract, over and above the time previously agreed to, but without UNFPA Malawi CO changing the scope of work, UNFPA’s prior written approval for the same shall be necessary. After completion of the assignment and submission of the final output/deliverables, the concerned project/unit on the basis of which final payment shall be made based on evaluation.  The research institution will submit the draft presentation before the debriefing session for taking inputs from concerned project authority. |
| **4. Duration and working schedule** | This consultancy is deliverable-based and is designed to be implemented during September 2023- July 2024.  Tentative start date of the consultancy is on 1st of September 2023. |
| **5. Delivery timeline and how work will be delivered** | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Phase** | **Key activities (planned and subject to change)** | **Expected outputs** | | **Design phase** | - Study kick-off meeting among a lead researcher, project management group and other key stakeholders  - Desk review  - Formulation and revision of the final set of research indicators and parameters  - Development of the study plan and inception report including research protocol and data collection methodologies | - Study work plan inception report and indicator matrix  - Presentation slide deck of the inception report  - Protocol submitted and approved by ethics committee | | **Field phase** | - Data collection in Dedza, Kasungu, Mangochi and Salima, (incl. pre-testing of tools)  - Virtual or physical meetings with all relevant stakeholders  - De-briefing meeting with the project management group | - Data collection and field visit plan  - Preliminary findings report  -Quarterly results report and slides  - De-briefing report | | **Reporting and dissemination phase** | - Analysis of the data and information and draft report writing  - Validation meeting (modality TBD) report  - Revision of the draft report based on the validation workshop feedback  - Final formatting and design of the report to professional quality  -Final presentation deck, summarizing the key research findings in user-friendly and visualized aids  -Consolidate quantitative and qualitative data sets and transcripts | - Draft final report  - Validation meeting report  - Final report which is formatted, organized, and designed to professional quality  - Research brief  - Final presentation deck, summarizing the key research findings  - All quantitative and qualitative data sets and transcripts | |
| **6. Monitoring and progress control, including reporting requirements** | This is a deliverable based consultancy and it is estimated to take place between September 2023-August 2024.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Phase** | **Timeline (September 2023-August 2024)** | | | | | | | | | | | | **Location** | | **Sep** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** | **Jan** | **Feb** | **Mar** | **Apr** | **May** | **Jun** | **Jul** | **Aug** | | **Design phase** | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Virtual | | **Field phase** |  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | Dedza, Kasungu, Mangochi and Salima | | **Reporting and dissemination phase** |  |  |  | X |  |  |  | X |  |  |  | X | Lilongwe/ Virtual | | |
| **7. Management of the study** | Under the overall guidance of the UNFPA Programme Specialist for JPGE and direct supervision of the UNFPA Programme Analyst (M&E). The JPGE programme team, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Youth, will provide technical guidance and inputs to the selected deliverables for the quality assurance. This will include other stakeholders and UNFPA staff. |
| **8. Expected travel:** | Field visits to the selected sites in Dedza, Kasungu, Mangochi and Salima are required. Travel to the field trip related costs should be included in the financial proposal. |
| **9. Bid evaluation criteria** | * **9.1. Technical evaluation:** The Technical Bid is evaluated on the basis of its responsiveness to the Terms of Reference, the Technical Bids submitted by the Bidders and the evaluation criteria published below.  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Criteria** | **Max points** | **Weighting %** | | 1. Technical approach and methodology – understanding nature and scope of work | 100 | 25% | | 2. Implementation (work) plan and management plan | 100 | 20% | | 3. Specific experience and expertise relevant to the assignment | 100 | 20% | | 4. Customer Satisfaction/Quality  Programme of the Company | 100 | 20% | | 5. Organization and staffing | 100 | 15% |   **9.2. Financial evaluation:** The Financial Bid will only be evaluated if the Technical Bid achieves the minimum score as indicated and is considered qualified through the supplier qualification process. Proposals failing to obtain this minimum technical threshold or those which will not be considered qualified through the supplier qualification process will not be eligible for further consideration.    **9.3. Total score:** The total score for each Bidder will be the weighted sum of the technical score and financial score. The maximum total score is 100 points.  Total score = 70% Technical Score + 30% Financial Score |
| **10. Payment schedule** | **Payments for evaluation consultancy is as follows:**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | **%** | **Deliverables** | | **1** | **30** | 1. Study work plan and inception report 2. Presentation slide deck of the inception report 3. Research Protocol   Upon receipt of satisfactory quality assessment by UNFPA | | **2** | **40** | 1. Data collection and field visit plan 2. Preliminary findings report 3. Quarterly results report and slides 4. De-briefing report   Upon receipt of satisfactory quality assessment by UNFPA and the payment will be broken down into two parts(20% for deliverable 4 and 5, another 20% for deliverable 6&7) | | **3** | **30** | 1. Draft final report 2. Validation meeting report 3. Final report which is formatted, organized and designed to professional quality 4. Research brief 5. Final presentation deck, summarizing the key research findings 6. All quantitative and qualitative data sets and transcripts   Upon receipt of satisfactory quality assessment by UNFPA | |
| **11. Expressions of interest** | Interested firms are invited to submit to UNFPA below documents.  a. A technical proposal, including a company profile and technical details on delivery of the assignment;  b. A financial proposal;  Email Subject: Expression of Interest: Consultancy to conduct operation research on sexual and reproductive health and rights and child marriages.  The proposal should be submitted by e‐mail no later than midnight 18 August, 2023. Proposals should not exceed 5MB.  E‐mail address: [procurement.malawi@unfpa.org](mailto:procurement.malawi@unfpa.org) |