

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Senior Advisor on Business Modernization in Complex Humanitarian Contexts

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Remote work, Business Performance and Modernization Section, GSSC, Budapest
DURATION OF CONTRACT	6.5 Months

Purpose of Assignment

UNICEF seeks a senior individual consultant to facilitate a focused analytical exercise with a selected group of humanitarian country offices and key regional and headquarters stakeholders to better model and address the nature, drivers and measurement of programme management and operational overhead costs. The purpose of the assignment is to agree an evidence-based framework to disaggregate and analyze operational and programme support costs in complex humanitarian country offices, and their implications for business model design and organizational efficiency. The assignment will identify practical approaches to improve the transparency, consistency and comparability of how such costs are understood, measured and reported within existing organizational systems and cost structures.

Humanitarian and emergency country offices present a particularly important area for analysis. Significant transactional inefficiencies have been observed in country offices that were previously scaled up during sudden onset emergencies (with new field offices, staff positions, and work processes created) with subsequent declines in emergency funding. Many of those countries retain relatively heavy structures, with programme management and institutional/operational overheads disproportionate to the size of now shrunken programme portfolios. Some of the UNICEF Country Offices that have experienced dramatic decreases in OR-E funding in the last few years include, for example, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen.

This assignment builds on the substantial work that UNICEF has previously undertaken to understand efficiency drivers in country offices and to identify opportunities to maximize resources for children through more efficient business models and operating approaches. Country Office Efficiency Analysis demonstrated variations in complexity and resource utilization across country office categories and highlighted the need for deeper examination of the underlying causes of, and solutions for, inefficiencies.

An improved internal analytical framework is needed to compare how different offices spend funds and achieve value for money. A more granular understanding and disaggregation of the full costs of programme implementation will be used to assess and support the efficiency and modernization journeys of different offices. This work directly feeds into advancing the Business Model Initiative (BMI), which seeks to align operating models, staffing structures and organizational resources with different programme strategies and contexts. It is also closely linked to the discussions emerging through UN80 and broader UN-system efforts to better understand programme management costs, overhead structures, and the effectiveness of country-level operating models.

The assignment will inform:

- Business model discussions.
- Office Modernization recommendations on country office efficiency.
- UNICEF engagement in UN80 and related UN-system discussions on programme management costs and operational effectiveness.
- Future guidance regarding humanitarian operating models, staffing structures and support mechanisms.

Scope of work

A. Literature and Document Review

Review relevant UNICEF and external material, including:

- Phase 1 Country Office Efficiency Analysis findings.
- BMI business model and programme typology work.
- UNICEF financial and budgetary guidance.
- Existing work on programme management costs and indirect cost recovery.
- Relevant UN80 discussion materials and comparable approaches used elsewhere in the UN system.

B. Humanitarian Country Office Analysis

Engage at a strategic level with a sample of approximately 6-8 humanitarian and emergency country offices

representing different sizes, regions and operating contexts. The analysis should focus on:

- Functions performed to enable programme delivery.
- Resources consumed by those functions.
- Allocation of staff time between programme implementation and programme enablement activities.
- Programme, staffing and budget structures.
- Effects of zonal/field office arrangements.
- Areas where current accounting classifications do not fully capture actual resource use.
- Perceptions of value and necessity of support functions.

C. Structured Consultative Process

Design and facilitate:

- Individual interviews with key stakeholders.
- Up to three virtual workshops (with a possibility of one being in-person) involving: OED, GSSC, DFAM, EMOPS, SD, PPR; Selected humanitarian country offices; Regional Office representatives. Workshops should aim to: Test concepts and definitions; Validate findings; Develop shared understanding of programme management costs; Identify practical approaches for improved measurement and transparency.

D. Analytical Framework Development

Develop a practical framework that:

- Describes major cost categories and how they can be analyzed consistently.
- Illustrates how activities and functions map to those categories.
- Identifies areas where current systems and recording practices create ambiguity.
- Proposes indicators for measuring programme management costs consistently across humanitarian offices.

E. Utilized-focused Recommendations

Provide strategic recommendations on:

- How UNICEF could improve oversight of programme management costs.
- Opportunities to strengthen efficiency analysis in humanitarian contexts.
- Implications for BMI business model discussions and Office Modernization recommendations.
- Potential contributions to UNICEF's position in UN80 discussions.

By the end of the assignment, UNICEF should have a practical and broadly agreed model for what constitutes programme management costs in humanitarian country offices, where current classifications create distortions, and how greater transparency could inform future business model decisions, efficiency initiatives, and UN80 discussions on programme management and overhead structures.

Work Assignment Overview	Deliverables/ Outputs	Delivery deadline and Input days
Detailed methodology, workplan, consultation approach and country office sample	Inception Report	15 December 2026 10 days
Review of relevant UNICEF, FFI and UN-system materials and initial hypotheses. The background paper should examine how programme management costs manifest in humanitarian country offices and the extent to which current financial classifications accurately reflect the reality.	Background Paper	15 Feb 2027 15 days
Design, facilitation and documentation of up to three workshops among selected humanitarian country offices and HQ stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of programme management cost drivers and measurement approaches.	Workshop Series	31 March 2027 15 days
Emerging findings and proposed analytical framework for distinguishing and assessing major categories of programmerelated expenditure, including direct programme implementation; programme	Interim Findings Note	30 April 2027 15 days

management/enabling functions; institutional/operational overhead; costs that cannot be clearly categorized under current accounting structures.		
Analysis, framework, findings and recommendations. The final report should identify structural drivers that influence programme management costs, including: Contextual complexity; Emergency response requirements; Security requirements; Programme modality and fragmentation, including the implementing partner portfolio; Staffing structures; Budget management; Delegation and compliance requirements; Support received from regional offices and GSSC.	Final Report	31 May 2027 15 days
Senior management presentation summarizing findings, implications and recommendations to inform BMI, Office Modernization and UN80 discussions concerning country office operating models and programme management cost transparency.	Executive Presentation	15 June 2027 5 days

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.
- The selected candidate is solely responsible for ensuring that the health insurance (and visa if applicable) required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the

contract. Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully-vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.

- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

**QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES
(CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT**

Minimum Qualification required:

Education: Masters degree

Enter Disciplines:

Advanced university degree in:

- Public administration;
- Economics;
- Public policy;
- Organizational effectiveness;
- International development;
- Business administration;
- Or related field.

Work Experience:

Minimum 10 years of relevant experience in:

- Organizational performance and efficiency analysis;
- Public sector or international organization reform;
- Humanitarian operations;
- Cost analysis and business model design;
- Facilitation of senior stakeholder consultations.

Language Requirements:

English

Knowledge/Expertise/Skills:

- Strong analytical and facilitation skills.
- Ability to engage senior stakeholders across functions.
- Excellent writing and presentation skills.
- Ability to translate complex operational issues into practical recommendations.

Desirables:

- Experience working with UN organizations.
- Familiarity with UNICEF programme and

operations functions.

- Experience in operating model reviews, shared services or programme management cost analysis.