

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### National Consultant to Support Development of the National MIYCN Guidelines

**CONTRACT MODALITY** Individual Consultancy

**DUTY STATION** Vientiane, Lao PDR (Remote, no travel required)

**DURATION OF CONTRACT** 6 months

#### Purpose of Assignment

Lao PDR continues to face high burden of child undernutrition, particularly during the critical first 1,000 days of life. Despite progress over the past decade, malnutrition remains a leading underlying factor contributing to child morbidity, mortality and poor cognitive development. The Lao Social Indicator Survey III (LSIS III, 2023) highlights persistent gaps in infant and young child feeding practices in Lao PDR. Nationally, 42 per cent of newborns are breastfed within one hour of birth, and 45 per cent of infants aged 0–5 months are exclusively breastfed. Continued breastfeeding declines sharply, with only 36 per cent of children aged 12–23 months still receiving breastmilk. Complementary feeding practices remain particularly weak: among children aged 6–23 months, only 49 per cent meet minimum meal frequency, 44 per cent achieve minimum dietary diversity, and just 32 per cent receive a minimum acceptable diet that meets both diversity and frequency standards. Marked disparities persist by geography, ethnicity, maternal education and household wealth, with children in rural and ethnic minority communities consistently less likely to meet recommended IYCF practices. These findings underscore the need to update and strengthen national Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) guidelines to improve the quality, consistency and equity of nutrition counselling and service delivery across Lao PDR.

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (GoL), through the Ministry of Health (MoH), has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving nutrition outcomes through key policy frameworks, including the National Nutrition Policy (2008), the National Nutrition Strategy (NNS), and the National Plan of Action on Nutrition (NPAN). MIYCN guidance in Lao PDR has traditionally been incorporated within broader policies, strategies, and operational tools rather than consolidated in a single, comprehensive guideline. Existing Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) guidance, developed in 2012, requires updating to reflect the latest WHO and UNICEF recommendations, emerging global evidence, and the current national policy and programme context. The 2020 Micronutrient Supplementation and Deworming Guidelines, also require revision following the recent introduction of Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) for pregnant women. At present, Lao PDR does not have dedicated national maternal nutrition guidelines.

Recent policy reviews and programme assessments have identified gaps in the dissemination, operationalization, and implementation of recommended IYCF practices, particularly at subnational levels. These analyses have also highlighted the need for updated, practical, and context-specific guidance to strengthen the capacity of health workers, programme managers, and implementing partners to deliver an integrated package of Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition services. Such guidance should be aligned with global standards and national priorities and support delivery through key service platforms, including antenatal care (ANC) services and Growth Monitoring and Promotion (GMP) platforms, commonly referred to as "Well Child Clinic."

UNICEF is engaging a Lead Consultant to support the Ministry of Health in the development of the National Maternal Nutrition Guidelines and the revision and updating of the Infant and Young Child Nutrition (IYCN) Guidelines for Lao PDR, ensuring alignment with current evidence, international recommendations, and national programme priorities.

To support this process, UNICEF is also seeking a National Consultant who will work closely with the Lead Consultant and the MoH to facilitate access to relevant national policies, guidelines, programme documents, and other reference materials. The National Consultant will support coordination and collaboration with government counterparts and key stakeholders, facilitate consultations and review processes, and provide local technical and contextual expertise to ensure that the guidelines are appropriately adapted to the Lao PDR context, including its health system structures, implementation realities, and socio-cultural diversity.

### **Scope of Work**

The National Consultant will support the overall guideline development process by providing technical and coordination assistance to the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, and the international consultant. Specifically, the consultant will facilitate engagement with relevant stakeholders, coordinate meetings and consultations with the national guideline development task force, compile and review national policies, guidelines, and evidence, and provide contextual inputs to ensure that the Maternal Nutrition and IYCN Guidelines are aligned with national priorities and implementation realities. The consultant will also support the organization of technical review meetings and validation workshops, document feedback from stakeholders, assist in incorporating agreed revisions into draft guidelines, and contribute to the finalization of guideline documents and related materials for submission to the Ministry of Health and UNICEF. Through close collaboration with government counterparts and partners, the consultant will help ensure national ownership, technical coherence, and timely completion of the guideline development process.

Under the overall supervision of UNICEF Lao PDR and in close coordination with the Ministry of Health (DHHP, Nutrition Centre and relevant departments), the consultant will undertake the following tasks:

#### **Evidence Gathering and Review**

- Compile and organize relevant national policies, strategies, guidelines, operational tools, training materials, and programme documents related to maternal nutrition, infant and young child nutrition, micronutrient supplementation, deworming, antenatal care, and related areas.
- Support the review of national surveys, assessments, programme reports, and other relevant evidence to inform guideline development.
- Provide contextual analysis of implementation challenges, service delivery practices, and cultural considerations relevant to maternal and child nutrition in Lao PDR.
- Contribute to the preparation of the gap analysis and background documentation.

#### **Coordination and Stakeholder Engagement**

- Support coordination between the Lead Consultant, Ministry of Health, the guideline development task force, and other stakeholders involved in the guideline development process.
- Liaise with relevant government departments, development partners, professional associations, and implementing partners to facilitate consultations and information sharing.
- Support the organization of meetings, consultations, and validation workshops, including preparation of agendas, presentations, background materials, and meeting reports.
- Document discussions, recommendations, and decisions from technical review meetings and consultations.

#### **Technical Support for Guideline Development**

- Provide technical inputs to ensure that the guidelines reflect the Lao PDR policy, programme, and service delivery context.
- Assist in identifying areas requiring adaptation to local languages, cultural practices, and implementation realities.

#### **Validation and Finalization of the National MIYCN Guidelines**

- Coordinate the circulation of draft guidelines for stakeholder review and support consolidation of comments received.
  - Support incorporation of agreed revisions into successive drafts.
  - Assist in the preparation and facilitation of validation workshops.
  - Support translation review to ensure consistency between the English and Lao versions of the guidelines.
- Support the launch of the Guidelines.

| Work Assignments Overview                                                  | Deliverables/Outputs                                                                                                                                                                        | Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Desk Review and Situation Analysis                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compilation of relevant national policies, guidelines, and reference materials</li> <li>• Inputs to desk review and gap analysis report</li> </ul> | 31 December 2026                              |
| Update of IYCN Guidelines and development of Maternal Nutrition Guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical inputs and revisions to draft guideline documents.</li> <li>• Summary of stakeholder consultations and meeting reports.</li> </ul>       | 28 February 2027                              |
| Validation and Finalization of the National Guidelines                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation workshop report</li> <li>• Final guidelines version in Lao</li> <li>• Guidelines launch report</li> </ul>                               | 30 May 2027                                   |

#### 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**

- **Education:** Bachelor's degree in nutrition, public health, medicine, or a related field
- **Work Experience:**
  - At least 8 years of professional experience in maternal, infant and young child nutrition, including guideline development or revision;
  - Demonstrated experience working with governments and UN agencies in Lao PDR;
  - Accuracy and professionalism in document production and editing.
- **Skills:**
  - Strong knowledge of WHO/UNICEF MIYCN guidance;
  - Proven facilitation, writing, and coordination skills;
  - Excellent oral and written skills; excellent drafting, formulation, reporting skills;
  - Ability to work in a multidisciplinary team and have the initiative to work independently to meet deadlines;
  - Self-motivated, ability to work with minimum supervision.
- **Language Requirements:** Excellent English and Lao language skills, oral and written