

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Interagency People-Centered Humanitarian Action Consultant

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Geneva, Switzerland (remote)
DURATION OF CONTRACT	7 months

Purpose of Assignment

The humanitarian system is undergoing significant reflection and reform through the Humanitarian Reset and broader discussions on UN80, localization and the future role of international actors in humanitarian response. A central ambition of these reform efforts is to move towards a humanitarian system that is locally led, globally supported, more efficient, more accountable and better able to respond to the priorities of people affected by crisis. At the same time, there is growing recognition that localization cannot be understood only as increasing funding to local actors, expanding local partnerships or shifting implementation responsibilities. A people-centred, locally led humanitarian system requires stronger local leadership together with stronger connections between accountability, participation, inclusion, representation and decision-making by and with affected communities. In this context, localization, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), community engagement, inclusion, participation, safeguarding and risk management should be understood as mutually reinforcing efforts that contribute to more effective, accountable and responsive humanitarian action.

Important interagency work was initiated in October 2024. Following requests by the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) in June and September 2024 for a concept note, definition and roadmap, a broad working group convened by InterAction - with participation from UNICEF, other United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, NGOs and networks - began work on 31 October 2024 and met four times through 13 December 2024.

The group developed a preliminary working definition of a people-centred approach, prioritizing local knowledge, resources and organizations, equitable and inclusive response, practical implementation and accountability to communities. It also consolidated key implementation challenges - including unequal power, institutional competition, rigid silos, fragmented policy approaches and an overload of stand-alone guidance - and identified initial areas for further action.

The work was originally envisaged as a six-month process but remained preliminary and was not completed or operationalized. Following the Humanitarian Reset and subsequent changes in the interagency architecture, the earlier OPAG-led pathway did not continue. This consultancy will therefore not repeat the conceptual exercise or assume the continuation of that process. It will take stock of what remains relevant, what has evolved or been taken forward elsewhere, what gaps persist and how the agenda can be repositioned through current interagency structures and discussions.

There is now a need to understand where selected humanitarian agencies have each landed on people-centred and related approaches since the October-December 2024 work and the Humanitarian Reset, and how their global commitments, frameworks and tools relate to corresponding collective initiatives at country level. The stocktaking and analysis should identify what remains relevant, what has evolved or been taken forward elsewhere, persistent gaps and barriers, areas of convergence and divergence, promising practices, and practical recommendations for stronger alignment and follow-up.

This consultancy will support interagency learning through a focused stocktaking, integrated mapping and analysis linking the October-December 2024 work to subsequent agency-level and country-level developments. It will translate the findings and recommendations into concise knowledge and learning products, validate and disseminate them through relevant current interagency consultations, communities of practice, technical exchanges and other coordination platforms, and conclude with a brief report of the work undertaken and handover.

The findings and recommendations will inform current interagency discussions on practical pathways to strengthen accountability, participation, representation, inclusion and locally led action. The final brief report will summarize the activities completed, products delivered, feedback received and any outstanding follow-up.

Scope of Work

Building on, but not repeating, the October-December 2024 interagency work, the consultancy will support learning and current discussions on people-centred, locally led humanitarian action and humanitarian system change through the following key result areas and deliverables:

1. Inception and detailed work planning

Deliverable 1: Prepare a concise inception report confirming the methodology, analytical questions, stakeholder engagement plan, workplan and timeline, risks and mitigation measures, agency and country coverage, allocation of days and costs, and draft/final payment milestones with UNICEF.

2. Stocktaking, mapping analysis and recommendations

Deliverable 2: Undertake a stocktaking of where selected humanitarian agencies have each landed on people-centred and related approaches since the October-December 2024 work and the Humanitarian Reset, together with an integrated mapping of corresponding country-level collective initiatives. Analyze what remains relevant, what has evolved, areas of convergence and divergence, persistent gaps and barriers, good practices, lessons and enabling factors, and provide detailed recommendations for agency-level and collective follow-up through current IASC interagency structures.

3. Knowledge and learning products, validation and dissemination

Deliverable 3: Develop concise knowledge and learning products based on the stocktaking and analysis, and validate and disseminate the findings and recommendations through relevant interagency consultations, communities of practice, technical exchanges and other coordination platforms, incorporating feedback into the final products.

4. Brief final report and handover

Deliverable 4: Submit a brief final report summarizing the work undertaken, stakeholders engaged, products delivered, feedback received, and agreed handover or outstanding follow-up.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
Inception and detailed work planning	Deliverable 1: Prepare a concise inception report confirming the methodology, analytical questions, stakeholder engagement plan, workplan and timeline, risks and mitigation measures, agency and country coverage, allocation of days and costs, and draft/final payment milestones with UNICEF.	Draft: 13 Nov 2026 Final: 20 Nov 2026 2 days
Stocktaking, integrated mapping, analysis and recommendations	Deliverable 2: Undertake a stocktaking of where selected humanitarian agencies have each landed on people-centred and related approaches since the October-December 2024 work and the Humanitarian Reset, together with an integrated mapping of corresponding country-level collective	Draft: 15 Dec 2026 Final: 28 Feb 2027 (to be confirmed after inception report) 18 days

	initiatives. Analyze what remains relevant, what has evolved, areas of convergence and divergence, persistent gaps and barriers, good practices, lessons and enabling factors, and provide recommendations for collective follow-up through current IASC interagency structures. Up to 2-3 international missions may be required to support consultations, follow-up with relevant stakeholders from the 2024 work and current Humanitarian Reset processes, and documentation of selected country-level collective initiatives. Travel costs including DSA will be budgeted and reimbursed separately in accordance with UNICEF rules and procedures.	
Knowledge and learning products, validation and dissemination	Deliverable 3: Develop concise knowledge and learning products based on the stocktaking and analysis, validate and disseminate the findings and recommendations through relevant interagency consultations, communities of practice, technical exchanges and other coordination platforms, incorporating feedback into the final products. (to be confirmed after inception report)	Draft: 31 Mar 2027 Final: 15 Apr 2027 8 days
Brief final report and handover	Deliverable 4: Submit a brief final report summarizing the work undertaken, stakeholders engaged, products delivered, feedback received, and agreed handover or outstanding follow-up.	Draft: 14 May 2027 Final: 31 May 2027 (to be confirmed after inception report) 2 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 requirements:

- Education:
 - Advance University Degree in Humanitarian affairs, international development, social sciences, public policy, communication for development / social and behaviour change, human rights, protection, gender, disability inclusion, monitoring and evaluation, organizational development, programme management, or another relevant field.
- Work Experience:
 - Minimum 10 years of relevant professional experience in humanitarian action, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), community engagement, participation, localization, inclusion, protection, safeguarding, or programme quality.
 - Demonstrated experience reviewing and building on prior interagency policy, reform or working-group processes, and documenting, analyzing or synthesizing good practices, lessons learned and evidence from humanitarian programmes or interagency initiatives.
 - Experience working with IASC or comparable interagency coordination mechanisms, humanitarian clusters, collective accountability initiatives, or country-level humanitarian coordination structures is required.
 - Experience developing knowledge products, learning briefs, case studies, synthesis reports or strategic recommendations for humanitarian audiences is required.
- Language requirement:
 - Fluency in English is required.
 - Knowledge of another United Nations language is considered an asset.
- Skills:
 - Strong understanding of people-centred, locally led and accountable humanitarian action, including how AAP, community engagement, localization, inclusion and safeguarding intersect in humanitarian coordination and programming, and familiarity with the Humanitarian Reset and evolving interagency architecture.
 - Excellent analytical, writing, facilitation and communication skills are required.

Desirables:

- Experience facilitating consultations, webinars, communities of practice, technical exchanges or multi-stakeholder learning processes is considered an asset.
- Experience working with UNICEF, another United Nations agency, an international NGO, or an interagency humanitarian platform is considered an asset.

Technical proposal requirement:

- Candidates must submit an updated CV and a cover letter outlining their relevant experience and suitability for the assignment.