unicef | for every child

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultant for the Policy Review: Harmful Social and Gender Norms transformation

(National candidates only)

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Pretoria, South Africa & Remote
DURATION OF CONTRACT	7.6 months

Purpose of Assignment

Under the supervision of the HIV Manager and Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Manager, and in close collaboration with the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), the consultant will conduct a comprehensive review of South Africa's HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) policies, strategic plans, guidelines, budgets, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems against the standards and recommendations outlined in the 2gether4SRHR Regional Policy Brief and Policy Guidance.

The review will encompass the National Strategic Plans on HIV, TB and STIs and on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, as well as other relevant national policies and frameworks, including but not limited to the Department of Basic Education's Policy and Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools, the National School Safety Framework, the Integrated School Health Policy, the National Policy on HIV, STIs and TB, and the National Plan of Action for Children 2025–2030 (National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children).

Based on this review, the consultant will produce a policy gap and alignment report, together with an integration report, to inform a consultative process aimed at achieving a shared understanding of priority social and gender norms, affected population groups, institutional mandates, financing requirements, and accountability mechanisms. The findings and recommendations will serve as the foundation for the development of operational plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks that support the systematic integration of actions to address harmful social and gender norms across sectors.

Background

South Africa has developed robust policy and strategic frameworks to address HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). However, harmful social and gender norms continue to undermine equitable access to services and negatively affect health and development outcomes. Gender inequality, harmful masculinities, age-related norms, stigma, discrimination, and the exclusion of women, adolescents, young people, persons with disabilities, and key populations remain significant barriers to HIV prevention and treatment, as well as the uptake of SRHR and GBVF services.

While these challenges are acknowledged within national strategies and policies, implementation remains fragmented across the health, education, social development, justice, gender, and community sectors. Coordination mechanisms are often weak, accountability is inconsistent, and the integration of social and gender norms transformation into operational plans, budgets, workforce development, service standards, and monitoring systems remains limited. Furthermore, many interventions are implemented as short-term awareness-raising initiatives rather than being institutionalised within government systems and programmes. Existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks rarely measure changes in social norms, institutional practices, or accountability mechanisms, limiting the generation of evidence needed to inform and strengthen implementation.

These gaps present an important opportunity to operationalise the UNICEF/UNFPA 2gether4SRHR Regional Policy Brief and Policy Guidance, while addressing the cross-cutting barriers to child wellbeing identified in the South Africa Country Office (SACO) 2026-2030 Country Programme Document. Through a structured review of existing policies, systems, financing arrangements, and accountability mechanisms, this consultancy will support the identification of opportunities to strengthen multisectoral coordination, institutionalise measurable approaches to harmful social and gender norms transformation within existing national systems, and enhance accountability for implementation across HIV, SRHR, and GBVF programmes. The findings will inform the development of practical recommendations, operational plans, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to support sustainable, coordinated, and system-wide action.

Scope of Work

This consultancy will contribute to the implementation of the section's Annual Work Plan (AWP).

The overall goal of the consultancy is to support the institutionalization of measurable harmful social and gender norms transformation within South Africa's HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) implementation systems through strengthened coordination, capacity, financing, monitoring, and accountability.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Review national policies, strategic and implementation plans, budgets, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems against the 2gether4SRHR Regional Policy Brief and Policy Guidance on Harmful Social and Gender Norms Transformation, applying a gender and social norms lens.
2. Assess the extent to which national frameworks align with the recommendations of the 2gether4SRHR Policy Brief and Guidance, identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.
3. Develop a policy and implementation gap and alignment report, including validated recommendations to strengthen the transformation of harmful social and gender norms.
4. Develop technical guidelines to support the integration of agreed recommendations and alignments into policies, operational plans, budgets, and M&E systems.

Activities and Tasks:

The consultant will lead and manage a review of national policies and implementation mechanisms through a harmful social and gender norms lens and identify opportunities for integrating behaviourally informed, evidence-based approaches to social and gender norms transformation.

Specific activities will include:

1. Inception and Planning
    - Facilitate an inception meeting with UNICEF, SANAC, and relevant stakeholders to confirm the scope of work, methodology, documents for review, deliverables, and timelines.
    - Develop and submit an inception report outlining the methodology, workplan, stakeholder engagement approach, and project timelines.
2. Policy and Systems Review
    - Conduct a comprehensive desk review of South Africa's HIV, SRHR, and GBVF policies, strategic plans, guidelines, budgets, implementation mechanisms, and M&E systems.
    - Assess the extent to which these frameworks address harmful social and gender norms, including stigma, discrimination, adultism, restrictive gender norms, and exclusion of vulnerable and key populations.

- Analyse alignment with the 2gether4SRHR Regional Policy Brief and Policy Guidance and identify policy, implementation, financing, coordination, accountability, and monitoring gaps.

3. Development of Draft Recommendations
    - Develop a draft policy gap and alignment report.
    - Prepare an integration matrix outlining proposed policy additions, amendments, and implementation actions to strengthen the systematic transformation of harmful social and gender norms.
    - Identify institutional responsibilities, accountability mechanisms, and opportunities for cross-sectoral coordination.
4. Validation and Consensus Building
    - Facilitate, in collaboration with SANAC and key partners, a validation workshop to review findings and build consensus on;
    - Priority harmful social and gender norms to be addressed;
    - Recommended policy and implementation revisions;
    - Institutional mandates and responsibilities;
    - Proposed accountability mechanisms and implementation timelines;
    - Document stakeholder feedback and agreed actions.
5. Finalization of Deliverables
    - Finalize the policy gap and alignment report and integration matrix, incorporating stakeholder feedback.
    - Develop technical guidelines to support the integration of agreed recommendations into policies, operational plans, budgets, implementation frameworks, and M&E systems.

Outputs and Deliverables

Deliverable Description

1. **Inception Report**

Detailed methodology, workplan, stakeholder engagement plan, and timeline.

2. **Draft Policy Gap and Alignment Report**

Draft report assessing policy alignment with the 2gether4SRHR Policy Brief and Guidance, including a matrix of proposed behaviorally informed and evidence-based additions and alignments.

3. **Validation Workshop Report and Presentation**

Summary of discussions, stakeholder feedback, agreed priorities, institutional responsibilities, and next steps.

4. **Final Policy Gap and Alignment Report**

Final report incorporating validation outcomes and detailing agreed priority norms, recommended policy and implementation changes, institutional mandates, accountability mechanisms, and implementation considerations.

5. **Technical Guidelines**

Practical guidance for integrating agreed recommendations into policies, operational plans, budgets, implementation mechanisms, and M&E systems.

Key Considerations

In addition to the technical review process, the consultancy will support broader policy dialogue and system strengthening by ensuring that:

The inception phase results in agreement on the final package of cross-sectoral policies, frameworks, implementation plans, and related documents to be reviewed, as well as the overall implementation approach.

The draft report provides an opportunity for internal review and cross-sectoral technical reflection on proposed revisions and recommendations.

The validation workshop facilitates national-level consensus-building on priority harmful social and gender norms, institutional responsibilities, accountability arrangements, and implementation timelines.

The final report supports policy advocacy and strategic engagement at national level by demonstrating the value of integrating harmful social and gender norms transformation into existing systems and programmes and advancing the outcomes of the SACO Country Programme Document (CPD) 2026-2030.

The technical guidelines provide accountable institutions with practical directions on what changes are required, why they are necessary, and how they can be implemented within existing systems and processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

UNICEF and SANAC will jointly provide strategic oversight and technical guidance throughout the consultancy.

UNICEF will:

Manage the consultancy contract.

Provide technical oversight and quality assurance for all deliverables.

Participate in key meetings and review deliverables.

Coordinate with relevant regional and national technical specialists.

Process consultant payments based on approved deliverables.

Support coordination with government and development partners.

SANAC Responsibilities

SANAC will:

Provide technical guidance and strategic oversight.

Coordinate stakeholder engagement and participation.

Facilitate validation workshops and related consultations.

Manage workshop logistics, including invitations, venues, conferencing arrangements, and stakeholder communications.

Review and approve deliverables.

Consultant Responsibilities

The consultant will:

Lead all technical aspects of the assignment.

Manage project planning, implementation, stakeholder consultations, and reporting.

Produce all agreed deliverables within the agreed timelines and quality standards.

Arrange and provide all necessary equipment, software, travel, accommodation, and facilitation resources required to undertake the assignment.

Ensure that recommendations are practical, evidence-based, and aligned with national priorities and the 2gether4SRHR framework.

Work Assignments Overview	**Deliverables/Outputs**	**Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable**
1. Convene inception meeting with UNICEF and SANAC to present the approach, clarify workplan, timelines, documents to be reviewed and deliverables	Deliverable #1 Inception report	20 December 2026
2. Develop draft Desktop Review Report of gaps in policies and implementation mechanism, and matrix of proposed additions and alignments	Deliverable #2 Draft Review Report and matrix of proposed revisions	30 February 2027
3. Matrix of proposed behaviourally informed, evidence based additions and alignments	Deliverable #3 Draft matrix of proposed revisions	7 April 2027
4. Facilitate validation workshop	Deliverable #4 Summary validation workshop report	30 May 2027
5. Final review report, integration matrix with recommended revisions and actions	Deliverable #5 Final report	13 June 2027
6. Develop technical guidelines to integrate recommended additions and alignments into policies, operational plans, budgets and M&E systems	Deliverable #6 Technical guidelines for integrating revisions into policies, operational plans, budgets and M&E systems	28 July 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.
- Contracts are conditional upon the selected candidate's willingness to comply with any current or future vaccination requirements that may be established by UNICEF, where applicable. Failure to comply with applicable vaccination requirements, where required and without an approved medical exemption by UNICEF, may result in the withdrawal of the consultancy offer or termination of the contract in accordance with the General Terms and Conditions of Contract.
- 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:

- Advanced university degree (Master's or higher) in Social and Behavior Change, Public Health, Development Policy, Sociology or related field.

Work Experience:

- Over 7 years of experience in SBC, public health, development or related field, including policy analysis and development.
- Over 7 years' experience in research and analysis, including desk review.
- Over 5 years' experience in facilitation high level workshops to develop consensus.
- Over 7 years' experience in design, implementation or evaluation of SBC policy and intervention to drive normative change.

Language Requirements:

- Proficient English – both spoken and written.

Desirables:

- Experience in HIV and SRHR an advantage.

- Experience with Government, UN agencies or SANAC an advantage.

Candidates are requested to submit a **Technical Proposal**, including:

1. **Understanding of the Assignment**
   - Brief description of the consultant's understanding of the objectives, scope, and expected outputs of the assignment. Identification of key considerations, challenges, and opportunities.
2. **Technical Approach and Methodology**
   - Proposed methodology for implementing the assignment.
   - Description of tools, frameworks, and approaches to be used.
   - Quality assurance mechanisms to ensure delivery of high-quality outputs.
3. **Work Plan and Timeline**
   - Detailed activity schedule aligned with the TOR.
   - Proposed milestones and deliverables.
   - Indication of level of effort and availability.
4. **Relevant Experience**
   - Description of similar assignments completed
   - Summary of the outcomes achieved in previous assignments.
5. **Curriculum Vitae (CV)**
   - Relevant educational qualifications.
   - Technical expertise relevant to the assignment.
   - Professional experience directly related to the TOR.
   - Experience working with government, UN agencies, NGOs, or development partners where applicable.
6. **Sample Work**
   - Provide at least two examples of previous work relevant to the assignment, which may include:
   - Strategic plans.
   - Technical reports.
   - Implementation frameworks.
   - Training materials.
   - Monitoring and evaluation tools.
   - Concept notes or policy documents.
7. **References**
   - Provide at least three professional references for similar assignments