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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Shock-Responsive Social Protection and Household Vulnerability Consultant

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Colombo Sri Lanka, Remote (With Travel when required)
DURATION OF CONTRACT	8 months

Purpose of Assignment

To provide technical and analytical support to UNICEF's evidence generation and policy work on household vulnerability and shock-responsive social protection, including collaborative analytical products and policy recommendations with UN partners in the context of recent and compound shocks, including the Middle East crisis.

Scope of Work

UNICEF Sri Lanka generates evidence and policy recommendations to strengthen household resilience and shockresponsive social protection in the context of recurrent and overlapping economic, climate, disaster and external shocks. As part of this evidence generation, UNICEF is undertaking a rapid telephone-based household survey to examine household socioeconomic conditions, exposure to recent shocks, coping responses, social protection, access to essential services and child wellbeing, including household-level impacts associated with the Middle East crisis. UNICEF also collaborates with other UN partners on complementary analytical work that brings together different evidence streams and translates them into practical policy recommendations.

This consultancy will support two connected areas of UNICEF's evidence and policy work. First, it will use relevant findings from the rapid telephone-based household survey, together with complementary evidence generated with UN partners, to contribute to a focused live case study on shock-responsive social protection, using Aswesuma as the principal entry point. Second, it will support the household vulnerability and social protection component of a broader collaborative analysis of external shocks affecting priority value chains and MSMEs. This second analytical stream will be explicitly built on the upstream enterprise and value-chain analysis undertaken by the collaborating UN partner(s). Based on the priority sectors, affected worker groups, employment channels and enterprise-level impacts identified through that analysis, the consultant will examine how shocks are transmitted to households, which household groups are most vulnerable, and where gaps exist in the coverage, adequacy and shock-responsiveness of social protection. Working closely with UNICEF and the collaborating UN partner(s), the consultant will help connect the enterprise-level and household-level evidence into a coherent analytical framework and contribute to practical policy recommendations, implementation options and joint policy dialogue.

Goal: To generate and translate policy-relevant evidence on how recent and compound shocks affect households and how social protection systems can respond, and to contribute to practical recommendations and collaborative policy dialogue for strengthening the adaptability, inclusion and child sensitivity of Sri Lanka's social protection system.

Objectives:

• Use existing household survey findings and complementary evidence to support a focused live case study on shock-responsive social protection, with Aswesuma as the principal entry point
• Analyze household vulnerability and social protection gaps arising from external, enterprise, employment and livelihood shocks, explicitly building on upstream enterprise and value-chain analysis generated through collaborative UN work.
• Develop practical policy options and recommendations for gender-responsive, inclusive, child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection through existing national systems.
• Contribute household vulnerability and social protection evidence to a jointly developed analytical framework and to collaborative technical discussions, policy dialogue and advocacy with UN partners and relevant stakeholders

Specific activities:

1) Prepare an inception report setting out the detailed workplan, analytical approach and sequencing for the two connected workstreams. The inception report will map the relevant evidence sources, datasets and analytical outputs; assess their comparative strengths, limitations and comparability; identify key evidence gaps; refine the research questions and methods; and set out anticipated coordination, consultation and engagement needs.
2) Review and synthesize relevant findings from the UNICEF rapid telephone-based household survey and complementary evidence generated with UN partners, administrative information and relevant secondary sources. Use these findings to support the development of an applied case study on shock-responsive social protection particularly on how Aswesuma could respond to an evolving shock . The consultant will not be expected to lead or duplicate the primary analysis of the UNICEF survey, which is undertaken through a separate research arrangement.
3) Develop the live case study and associated policy recommendations, using Aswesuma as the principal entry point and the Middle East crisis and other recent shocks as the operational context. The analysis should consider household vulnerability, social protection coverage and gaps, adequacy and accessibility, the protective role of social protection, selected system enablers and constraints, and feasible near-term and medium-term response options. Support agreed joint technical review or policy discussion with collaborating UN partners and relevant stakeholders where needed.
4) For the second analytical workstream, review and build on the findings of the upstream enterprise and valuechain analysis undertaken by the collaborating UN partner(s). Working with UNICEF and the collaborating UN partner(s), prepare and refine a joint analytical alignment/inception framework that identifies the priority household groups and enterprise/employment-to-household transmission channels to be examined, defines the household vulnerability and social protection research questions, maps available evidence and data gaps, and determines whether any targeted household-level consultations or other focused primary engagement are required.
5) Based on the upstream enterprise and value-chain findings and the agreed joint analytical framework, undertake the household vulnerability and social protection analysis. The analysis should examine how identified enterprise, employment and livelihood shocks affect relevant household groups, including impacts on income, employment, informal and contributing family work, gender and unpaid-care dynamics, child and household wellbeing, and household coping. It should also assess gaps in the coverage, adequacy and shock-responsiveness of existing social protection for the affected household profiles. Where jointly agreed and necessary to address evidence gaps, the consultant may support targeted household-level consultations or other focused engagement. Findings should be progressively shared and discussed with UNICEF and the collaborating UN partner(s) to support alignment with the broader joint analysis.
6) Work with UNICEF and the collaborating UN partner(s) to integrate the household vulnerability and social protection findings with the upstream enterprise and value-chain analysis. Contribute to the jointly developed analytical framework, including the identification of key enterprise-to-household transmission pathways, priority vulnerabilities, social protection gaps, and practical policy and implementation options. Support the preparation of joint policy-facing materials and agreed technical discussions, policy dialogue and advocacy, and revise the analysis and recommendations based on the joint review process, while maintaining clear documentation of evidence sources, assumptions, methodological limitations and areas requiring further work.

The consultancy will not lead the primary analysis of the UNICEF rapid telephone-based survey or duplicate the upstream enterprise and value-chain analysis undertaken through the collaborating UN workstream. It is also

not expected to conduct a full causal impact evaluation of Aswesuma, a comprehensive national social protection readiness assessment, a full fiscal-space or detailed programme costing exercise, or a complete national social protection reform roadmap. Any additional primary household engagement or advanced evaluative analysis will be undertaken only if jointly agreed, methodologically justified and necessary for the agreed analytical products.

Work Assignments Overview	**Deliverables/Outputs**	**Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable**
1. Inception and analytical planning for the two workstreams	**Deliverable 1** Inception report approved by UNICEF, setting out: (i) a detailed workplan and sequencing for both workstreams; (ii) mapping of relevant evidence sources, datasets and analytical outputs; (iii) assessment of their strengths, limitations and comparability; (iv) key evidence gaps; (v) refined research questions and methods; and (vi) the proposed coordination, consultation and stakeholder-engagement approach	30 November 2026
2. Survey-informed analysis and draft shock-responsive social protection case study	**Deliverable 2** Draft applied case study submitted and approved by UNICEF, using Aswesuma as the principal entry point and drawing on relevant findings from the UNICEF rapid telephone-based household survey, complementary evidence generated with UN partners, administrative information and secondary sources. The draft will assess household vulnerability, social protection coverage and gaps, adequacy, accessibility, selected system enablers and rather than duplicate, the primary survey analysis.constraints, and feasible	31 January 2027

	response options. It will include preliminary policy recommendations and will synthesize	
3. Finalization and policy translation of the shock-responsive social protection case study	**Deliverable 3** Final case-study package approved by UNICEF, comprising: (i) the revised analytical case study; (ii) a concise policy-facing summary or brief; (iii) presentation materials; and (iv) technical inputs to one agreed joint technical or policy discussion, if required. The finalized package will clearly document evidence sources, assumptions and methodological limitations.	28 February 2027
4. Joint analytical framework and initial household vulnerability and social protection analysis	**Deliverable 4** Joint analytical alignment framework and initial analysis approved by UNICEF, including: (i) review of the upstream enterprise and value-chain findings generated by the collaborating UN partner(s); (ii) identification of priority household groups and enterprise/employmentto-household transmission pathways; (iii) household vulnerability and social protection research questions; (iv) mapping of available evidence and data gaps; (v) specification of any targeted household-level consultations or other focused engagement required; and (vi) initial household vulnerability and social protection findings based	30 April 2027

	on available evidence.	
5. Final household vulnerability and social protection analysis, integrated synthesis and policy recommendations	**Deliverable 5** Final analytical package approved by UNICEF, comprising: (i) the completed household vulnerability and social protection analysis; (ii) contributions to the jointly developed integrated analytical framework connecting enterprise-level and household-level findings; (iii) identification of priority vulnerabilities and social protection gaps; (iv) practical policy recommendations and implementation options; (v) contributions to policy-facing materials; and (vi) technical inputs to agreed joint discussions, policy dialogue and advocacy. Final documentation will clearly record evidence sources, assumptions, methodological limitations and areas requiring further work	14 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:** Masters Degree or equivalent in economics, development economics, social policy, public policy, statistics, development studies or another relevant social science. A PhD is an asset.
- **Work Experience:** At least seven years of relevant professional experience in social protection, poverty or vulnerability analysis, development economics, household research, or related fields.

  Demonstrated experience in producing high-quality analytical reports or policy products using household-level evidence and multiple data sources.

  Demonstrated experience in analyzing household, administrative, secondary and/or qualitative data to inform social protection, poverty or vulnerability policies.

  Experience undertaking or supporting household-level research, stakeholder consultations or mixed-method analysis.
- **Skills:** Strong analytical and mixed-method skills, including the ability to synthesize household survey findings, administrative and secondary data, qualitative evidence and policy information.

  Strong knowledge of social protection, poverty and vulnerability analysis.

  Ability to assess the quality, comparability and limitations of different evidence sources and translate findings into clear, feasible policy recommendations.

Ability to design or support focused household-level or stakeholder consultations, where required, and integrate qualitative evidence with existing quantitative analysis.

Excellent analytical writing, presentation and datavisualization skills.

Strong interpersonal and collaborative skills, with the ability to work effectively across agencies and disciplines.

- **Language Requirements:** Excellent written and spoken English is required. Knowledge of Sinhala and/or Tamil is an asset, but is not required for international candidates.
- **Desirables:** Experience assessing social assistance coverage, adequacy, targeting, delivery systems and/or shock responsiveness.

  Knowledge or experience in adaptive or shock-responsive social protection.

  Experience integrating gender, child, disability and other leave-no-one-behind dimensions into policy or vulnerability analysis.

  Familiarity with Sri Lanka's social protection system and current reform context, including Aswesuma and relevant delivery and administrative arrangements.

  Experience working with UN agencies, government institutions, international financial institutions and/or research organizations. Experience working with confidential or sensitive household evidence in accordance with ethical and data-protection requirements.

  Familiarity with statistical analysis software such as Stata, R or Python.