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TERMS OF REFERENCE

International Consultant: After-Action Review of UNICEF's Response to the 2026 Nepal Rasuwa Floods

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Bangkok, Thailand Remote with Travel
DURATION OF CONTRACT	2.5 Months

Purpose of Assignment

UNICEF seeks an experienced consultant to conduct a focused, learning-oriented After-Action Review (AAR) of UNICEF's preparedness for and response to the severe floods that struck Nepal on 26 August 2026. The AAR will identify what worked well, what constrained performance, and what should change in preparedness, response and the transition to recovery. It will pay particular attention to how UNICEF supported and complemented the Government of Nepal-led response at national, provincial, district and municipal levels, rather than assessing government performance.

The assignment will produce an inception report, an AAR report, a facilitated validation and sensemaking workshop, and an action-oriented recommendation matrix.

2. Background and context

2.1 Flood impacts and evolving needs

Severe flash floods struck Nepal on 26 August 2026, causing extensive loss of life, displacement and damage to homes and essential infrastructure. Some 84,270 people, including 32,021 children and 1,854 persons with disabilities were estimated to have been affected as per the inter-agency Flash Appeal, released on 4 September. These figures remained subject to revision as assessments continued and access to some affected areas improved. As of 4 October 2026, Government authorities reported 1,458 deaths and 5,285 people missing, while approximately 417 people remained in 11 holding centers across three districts.

The floods damaged or destroyed homes, roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure, disrupting access to affected communities and the continued provision of basic services. Reported damage included 64 water supply systems, approximately 10,000 toilets, seven health facilities and 23 schools. The effects extended beyond the immediate damage and destruction of infrastructure: loss of safe water and sanitation increased public health risks; damage to health facilities disrupted access to trauma and routine care; and damage to schools interrupted learning and left many children dependent on temporary learning arrangements. Humanitarians identified approximately 84,000 people requiring WASH support, 30,000 children requiring education assistance, 22,100 children requiring protection support and 14,900 children requiring nutrition assistance.
Many families were displaced, with most staying with host families, while others were sheltering in Government-run displacement/holding centers. Patterns of displacement and humanitarian needs continued to evolve in the weeks

following the floods. On 21 October, approximately 417 people remained in 11 holding centers

across three districts, down from more than 4,500 displaced people accommodated in 38 holding centers in early September

Families were increasingly relocating to temporary shelters, Government-supported rented accommodation and host communities. While the decline in the number of people living in holding centers represented an important transition, it also dispersed displaced populations across a wider range of locations. This reinforced the need for community-based outreach, protection monitoring and continuity of essential services, including family tracing and reunification, case management, psychosocial support and referrals to specialized services. Children, women, adolescents and persons with disabilities faced heightened risks of family separation, trafficking, exploitation and gender-based violence during displacement and relocation.

As the Government's response moved on from search and rescue to search and recovery, UNICEF's response shifted from immediate life-saving assistance in the first days to a twin-track approach, continuing life-saving assistance while helping restore essential services and lay the ground for early recovery. Access remained a significant operational constraint, with some severely affected locations inaccessible by road and requiring alternative delivery arrangements. At the same time, the restoration of water systems, sanitation facilities, health services, schools, social protection mechanisms and community-based protection services was becoming increasingly important. The Government-led Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment estimated overall recovery and reconstruction needs at approximately US$4.8 billion, including US$57.7 million for early recovery during the first six months, with significant requirements across housing, education, health, water and sanitation, livelihoods and disaster risk reduction.1

2.2 Government leadership and humanitarian coordination

The Government of Nepal has led the response through established national, district and municipal disaster-management mechanisms, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority and the National Emergency Operations Centre. District administrations and affected municipalities have coordinated assessments, relief operations and the transition from holding centers to temporary shelter and other recovery arrangements. The UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, supported by OCHA, has facilitated the coordinated UN and humanitarian contribution through the UN Country Team, Humanitarian Country Team, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, ensuring that international assistance is aligned with government priorities. The inter-agency Flash Appeal for Nepal (4 September 2026) sets out the joint response plan and funding requirements for this collective effort

Within the government-led sector coordination system, UNICEF co-leads WASH, Nutrition, Education and Protection with the relevant ministries and UN partners, while also participating in other relevant coordination mechanisms, including Health, Shelter, Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Early-Recovery and the inter-agency PSEA Working Group. UNICEF has supported joint assessments, information management, response planning and operational coordination at national and subnational levels.

2.3 UNICEF response

On 1 September, UNICEF activated a Level 2 Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure for the Nepal flood response through 30 November 2026, 2 enabling stronger regional leadership, additional technical, operational and surge support from regional and global levels, and the application of UNICEF's simplified Emergency Procedures to speed up the response.

In its response, UNICEF adopted a twin-track approach that combined the continued delivery of immediate humanitarian assistance with early recovery, restoration of essential services and support for more sustainable solutions for affected children, families and communities. The response covers health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, child protection, education, shock-responsive social protection and humanitarian cash transfers, social and behaviour change, risk communication and community engagement, supply and logistics, field coordination and operational support. Accountability to affected populations, gender and disability inclusion were intended to be mainstreamed across programme design and implementation.

Programme delivery sought to respond to immediate needs while progressively restoring access to services. In WASH, UNICEF dispatched hygiene kits and water-treatment and storage supplies; installed temporary sanitation facilities in shelters, restored water systems; and provided equipment to support the rehabilitation of damaged Government water-supply systems. In education, UNICEF has established temporary learning centers, provided school-based psychosocial support and trained teachers on learning recovery and accelerated learning. In health, UNICEF supported the oral cholera vaccination campaign in Rasuwa and Nuwakot, deployed mental health specialists, provided medical tents and essential health supplies, and supported community-based disease surveillance. Nutrition interventions included screening children under five and adolescent girls for acute malnutrition, treatment and preventive nutrition support, counselling for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and orientation of health workers on nutrition in emergencies

Child protection interventions included psychological first aid, counselling and community-based psychosocial support; and the establishment of child-friendly spaces. UNICEF also supported the identification and verification of unaccompanied and separated children, family tracing and reunification, and interim care arrangements where reunification was not immediately possible. Frontline workers were also trained in stress management, psychological first aid, PSEA and safe, accountable and survivor-centred services.

UNICEF also used Government systems to support shock-responsive social protection and humanitarian cash transfers. Engagement was underway with eleven municipalities across Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading, using municipal registration, verification and payment arrangements. Beneficiary lists were publicly disclosed for grievance redress, households were notified through SMS, and payments were made through bank transfers. By 13 October, municipalities had transferred NPR 15,000 per household to 934 affected households through the govt system .3 Early implementation also highlighted possible inclusion issues, particularly for non-permanent residents and households whose livelihoods were indirectly affected but who might not meet municipal eligibility criteria.

Risk communication and community engagement were used to disseminate information on flood preparedness, outbreak prevention, mental health, gender-based violence, child protection, protection from sexual protection and abuse (PSEA) and misinformation. UNICEF-supported communication reached nearly 5.9 million people through radio, SMS, digital, public, private, Internet

of Good Things, U-Report and community channels4. UNICEF also analysed public online narratives to identify concerns, information needs and misinformation and used the findings to adjust communication activities. Government officials, civil society representatives and UNICEF personnel received training on accountability to affected populations and disability-inclusive emergency response, while consultations with local governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and humanitarian partners sought to identify barriers to inclusive assistance

Supply and logistics formed a major enabling component of the response. By 13 October, UNICEF had dispatched health, nutrition, WASH, education and child protection supplies valued at approximately US$781,000, drawing on pre-positioned stocks as well as additional supplies received through international support.5 Further supplies valued at approximately US$2.4 million were being mobilized through global and local procurement channels, including supplies for winterization. UNICEF also installed a 240-square-metre mobile warehouse in Nuwakot to increase storage capacity, strengthen inventory management and facilitate onward distribution. Damaged and inaccessible roads nevertheless continued to constrain last-mile delivery, requiring coordination around alternative transport capacity for communities that remained inaccessible by road

3. Purpose, objectives and intended use

The primary purpose of the AAR is organizational learning and improvement, while also documenting UNICEF's performance and follow-up commitments for internal accountability. It will provide timely, credible and actionable evidence to inform the continuing response and transition to recovery, strengthen preparedness for future disasters and other sudden-onset climate-related emergencies, and clarify follow-up actions at country, regional and headquarters levels. The AAR will be initiated during the Level 2 Corporate Emergency Activation period, which is scheduled to remain in effect until 30 November 2026, and will continue through January 2027.

Specific objectives are to:

- Assess the adequacy of preparedness measures and how they enabled or constrained the speed, appropriateness and quality of the response.
- Effectiveness of UNICEF's role as cluster co-leads for Education, Nutrition, Protection, WASH and Inter-Agency Community Engagement and AAP working group
- Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, timeliness and operational efficiency of UNICEF's response, including programme, supply and logistics, communication, partnerships, people and workforce management, financing, data and monitoring arrangements.
- Examine how effectively UNICEF supported and complemented the Government of Nepal-led response and worked through national, provincial, district and municipal systems and coordination structures.
- Assess UNICEF's internal leadership, decision-making and coordination, including support from APRO, headquarters (incl. COEs), Supply Division and surge mechanisms under the L2 activation.
- Examine whether the response was people-centred, equitable, accountable and inclusive, including attention to children, girls, women, adolescents, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, displaced and mobile populations, and other groups facing heightened vulnerability.

- Assess how well the response connected immediate humanitarian action with early recovery, social protection, resilient rehabilitation and longer-term preparedness.
- Identify good practices, persistent bottlenecks and priority actions, with clear ownership and realistic timeframes

Scope of Work

4. Scope

- Temporal scope: preparedness prior to 26 August 2026; response from 26 August 2026 through the start of data collection; and emerging transition-to-recovery arrangements available during the review.
- Geographic scope: national coordination and the most affected districts, with emphasis on Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading, and selective attention to other affected districts where evidence is material.
- Institutional scope: UNICEF Nepal, field and surge teams, APRO and relevant headquarters and global support functions, including CoEs; selected government, UN, NGO, civil society, donor and community-level stakeholders where feasible and appropriate.
- Programmatic scope: UNICEF's multisectoral programme response and its principal enabling functions, including coordination, partnerships, supply and logistics, staffing (incl. surge), financing, administration, monitoring, communications, accountability and recovery planning.
- Out of scope: a performance assessment of the Government of Nepal; a full impact evaluation; attribution of population-level outcomes solely to UNICEF; and audit or investigation functions.

5. Key review questions (draft)

The draft questions below provide the overall framework for the AAR. During inception, the consultant and review management team will prioritize a limited set of core questions and identify subsidiary lines of inquiry, taking account of intended use, available evidence, access and the 30-day level of effort. The review should focus on UNICEF's performance and contribution within the Government-led response and should generate practical, prioritized and actionable recommendations.

5.1 Preparedness and readiness

Core question: How well prepared was UNICEF Nepal for a major flood and landslide emergency, and how did preparedness arrangements influence the timeliness and quality of the response?

- How adequate were UNICEF's risk analysis, contingency planning and preparedness measures for a major flood and landslide emergency?
- To what extent did UNICEF's preparedness measures, including emergency management and coordination arrangements, staff readiness and surge capacity, supply and logistics systems, programme implementation modalities, cash-based assistance mechanisms, preparedness financing, advocacy and communication, enable a timely response?
- To what extent were lessons from previous emergencies in Nepal and the region incorporated into preparedness and response arrangements, and which preparedness gaps persisted?
- What specific areas need to be improved to strengthen future preparedness?

5.2 Support to the Government-led response and coordination

Core question: How effectively did UNICEF support and complement Government leadership and contribute to coordination and collective response efforts?

- How effectively did UNICEF support Government leadership at national, provincial, district and municipal levels?
- How effectively did UNICEF strengthen Government-led assessments, information management, planning, operational coordination and service delivery systems to ensure alignment with national and sub national priorities?
- Were UNICEF's roles within sectoral and inter-agency coordination arrangements clear, adequately resourced and value-adding?
- How coherent and effective was UNICEF's coordination with the Resident Coordinator's Office, UNCT/HCT, OCHA, UN agencies and other humanitarian actors?
- How inclusive were coordination arrangements, and what could UNICEF do differently to strengthen the participation of local authorities, civil society, organizations of persons with disabilities and affected communities?

5.3 Programme effectiveness and adaptation

Core question: How relevant, timely, effective and adaptable was UNICEF's multisectoral response to evolving needs and priorities?

- How timely, relevant and appropriate was UNICEF's multisectoral response in relation to evolving humanitarian needs, Government priorities and the response of other actors?
- To what extent were WASH, health, nutrition, education, child protection, social protection, cash and community-engagement interventions designed and delivered as a coherent package rather than as parallel sectoral responses?
- To what extent did UNICEF achieve its planned response targets and support continuity and quality of essential services, particularly for children and groups facing heightened vulnerability?
- How effectively were joint assessments, disaggregated data, field monitoring and community feedback used to prioritize geographic areas, population groups, interventions and delivery modalities?
- How effectively did UNICEF adapt its programmes, partnerships and operational presence to reach affected and most vulnerable populations wherever they were and as affected families moved from holding centres to temporary shelters, rented accommodation and host communities?
- How were Government systems implementing partners and other delivery arrangements activated sufficiently quickly and used appropriately in relation to different programme and geographic needs?
- To what extent did partnership arrangements support local leadership, complementarity and equitable participation while avoiding duplication, gaps and unnecessary transaction costs?

5.4 Operational enablers and corporate support

Core question: How effectively did UNICEF's operational systems, leadership arrangements and corporate support mechanisms enable the response?

- How effectively did pre-positioning, procurement, transport, warehousing, inventory management and last-mile distribution support programme delivery?
- How appropriate and adaptable were UNICEF's delivery routes and supply modalities considering damaged infrastructure, difficult terrain and continuing access constraints?
- Were supply tracking, end-user monitoring, third-party monitoring, and partner and Government reporting sufficient to determine where supplies were delivered, who received them and whether they were used as intended?
- How effectively did human resources, surge support, security, finance, administration and ICT enable the response, including staff deployment, rotation, wellbeing and duty of care?
- How effectively and quickly were internal and external financial resources mobilized, allocated and adjusted in response to changing priorities?
- To what extent were mechanisms in place to ensure that decisions on the allocation and reallocation of resources were evidence-based, appropriately consulted and aligned with evolving response priorities?
- How clear and effective were leadership arrangements, decision-making responsibilities and accountabilities within UNICEF Nepal and between the country office, APRO and headquarters?
- To what extent did the Level 2 activation and related corporate mechanisms provide timely, proportionate and demand-driven technical and operational support?
- How effective were UNICEF's internal coordination mechanisms, information flows, escalation processes and follow-up arrangements in supporting timely, inclusive and efficient decision-making across field, provincial, national, regional and headquarters levels?
- How effective were the different delivery modalities including direct service support, supplies, cash transfers, use of government systems and implementation through partners for different groups, locations and phases of the response?
- Which elements of regional, headquarters and surge support should be maintained, adjusted or phased out as the response transitions towards recovery?

5.5 Accountability, inclusion, recovery and future preparedness

Core question: To what extent was the response people-centred, inclusive and accountable, and how effectively did it support recovery and future resilience?

- To what extent were accountability to affected populations and community feedback integrated into assessments, programme decisions, implementation and adaptation?
- How effectively did the response identify and address barriers affecting children, women, adolescents, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, displaced and mobile populations and other groups facing heightened vulnerability?
- How were gender equality, disability inclusion, PSEA, child safeguarding, data protection, do-no-harm and safe-referral requirements adequately integrated across UNICEF and partner activities?
- How effectively did UNICEF identify and respond to protection risks, including family separation, trafficking, exploitation, violence and psychosocial distress?
- How effectively did situation reporting, communications, advocacy, media engagement and donor engagement support the response, resource mobilization and attention to the needs and rights of affected children?
- Were external communications evidence-based, coordinated and appropriately sensitive to Government leadership and the dignity of affected people?

- How coherent was the connection between immediate humanitarian assistance, restoration of essential services, shock-responsive social protection, early recovery and resilient reconstruction?
- How effectively did UNICEF position its evidence, sectoral expertise and partnerships to support Government-led damage and needs assessments, recovery planning and longer-term systems strengthening?
- Which practices and capacities from the response should UNICEF retain or institutionalize, and which priority actions should be implemented over the next 3, 6 and 12 months?

6. Approach and methodology

The AAR should be utilization-focused, participatory, independent in analysis, proportionate to the learning purpose and designed to minimize demands on personnel still managing the response. The selected consultant(s) will propose a mixed-method approach and a review matrix linking questions, standards, indicators, sources and analytical methods.
Desk review of preparedness plans, sitreps, appeals, government assessments, response and recovery plans, programme and partnership documents, supply and logistics records, monitoring data, community feedback, communications products, funding information, surge and staffing documentation, meeting records, previous reviews, evaluations and exercises. Attention should be paid to whether recommendations from earlier preparedness and response reviews in Nepal and the region were implemented and influenced the 2026 response

- Semi-structured interviews and small-group discussions with UNICEF Nepal leadership and sections, field and surge personnel, APRO and headquarters staff, selected government counterparts, UN and NGO partners, civil society organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, women-led organizations, donors and other stakeholders.
- Please note that limited field visits to selected affected locations will need to be conducted, if feasible and approved, to understand coordination, implementation and transition-to-recovery arrangements. Where safe, ethical and proportionate, the methodology should incorporate affected-population perspectives through existing feedback and monitoring data and, only where necessary, limited consultations with adult community representatives.
- Rapid analysis of available quantitative performance and monitoring data, disaggregated where possible, combined with qualitative triangulation.
- A participatory validation and sensemaking workshop, preferably by mid-December 2026, to test findings and prioritize recommendations.
- A recommendation/action matrix setting out priority level, responsible owner, supporting actors and proposed completion timeframe.

The inception and final reports should clearly document evidence gaps, limitations, potential biases and the implications of these for findings and conclusions

Analytical benchmarks should include the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, relevant UNICEF emergency procedures and guidance, commitments on AAP and PSEA, applicable humanitarian standards, and the Government of Nepal's relevant emergency response and shock-responsive social protection frameworks

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7. Ethics, safeguarding and data protection

Although an AAR is not an evaluation under the UNEG definition, the consultant must apply principles of utility, impartiality, transparency, professionalism, human rights, gender equality, confidentiality and do no

harm. The work must comply with applicable UNICEF ethical standards for research, evaluation, data collection and analysis, safeguarding requirements, PSEA standards and data-protection requirements. The inception report must identify ethical and safeguarding risks and mitigation measures. Informed consent is required for all primary data collection. Reports and shared evidence products should not include names or other identifying details unless there is a clear operational need, informed authorization and appropriate data-protection safeguards. The consultant should avoid interviewing children unless UNICEF determines that this is essential, ethically justified and appropriately reviewed. The default methodological approach should use existing evidence and adult stakeholders.

8. Governance and quality assurance

The assignment will be managed by the APRO Regional Evaluation Adviser in close collaboration with APRO Emergency Team and UNICEF Nepal CO. A small reference group should include representatives of UNICEF Nepal management and key sections, APRO Evaluation and Emergency, and relevant headquarters functions. Government and partner representatives may be engaged as key informants and in validation of factual and coordination-related findings, while UNICEF retains responsibility for the review and management response.
The reference group will provide technical and factual input but will not determine the consultant's findings or conclusions. UNICEF management will be responsible for agreeing, assigning and monitoring follow-up actions arising from the review.

The contract manager will coordinate review and feedback processes and approve deliverables in consultation with the APRO Emergency Specialist. The consultant is expected to maintain an evidence trail, transparently distinguish evidence from interpretation, and correct factual errors while retaining independence over findings and conclusions

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable
Inception	**Deliverable 1** Inception meetings; document inventory; stakeholder map; review matrix; methodology, tools, ethics/risk plan and detailed workplan. Inception report, max. 15 pages excluding annexes.	30 Nov 2026
Desk review and data collection	**Deliverable 2** Complete desk review; conduct interviews/group discussions; maintain evidence matrix and emerging issues log. Brief progress note and debrief.	17 Dec 2026
Analysis and emerging findings	**Deliverable 3**. Triangulate evidence; prepare draft findings, conclusions and prioritized recommendations. Draft AAR report, max. 25 pages excluding annexes, plus draft action matrix and slide deck	21 Dec 2026
Validation and sensemaking	**Deliverable 4** Prepare and facilitate a one-day workshop with UNICEF and selected stakeholders; document validated findings and agreed action priorities. Workshop materials and concise proceedings note.	21 Dec 2026
Final reporting	**Deliverable 5** Final AAR report; 3-page executive summary; final action matrix; final presentation; appropriately redacted evidence	15 Jan 2027

	matrix for internal retention, subject to confidentiality and data- protection requirements, and interview list	

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: Master’s in in evaluation, international development, humanitarian affairs, disaster risk management, public policy, social sciences or a related field.

Work Experience: At least 10 years of relevant experience in evaluation, review, learning or applied research, including substantial experience in humanitarian response, preparedness and/or early recovery.
Demonstrated experience leading AARs, real-time reviews, humanitarian evaluations or comparable learning exercises for the UN, government or international organizations.

Experience with sudden-onset disasters, flood response, climate resilience, social protection/cash, supply and logistics, or multisectoral child-focused programming is desirable

Skills: Strong knowledge of government-led disaster response, humanitarian coordination, local and national systems, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Nepal or South Asia experience is a strong asset.
Excellent qualitative and quantitative analytical skills and ability to synthesize complex evidence into concise, accessible reports

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Language Requirements :Excellent spoken and written English.

Desirables Proven ability to facilitate senior-level and multisectoral workshops, manage divergent perspectives and translate findings into practical, prioritized actions.