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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mapping and Assessment of the Alternative Care System and Development of a National Childcare Reform Strategy in Nepal – National Consultant

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	Nepal
DURATION OF CONTRACT	9.3 months

Purpose of Assignment

Nepal has established an important legal and policy foundation for the protection of children without adequate parental care, guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009) and the Constitution of Nepal (2015), which recognizes every child's right to proper care, upbringing, protection and development from both the family and the State. The Act Relating to Children, 2018 and the Rules Relating to Children, 2022 provide for a hierarchy of alternative care options, establish responsibilities for placement and monitoring, and regulate childcare homes. The federal system has also redistributed child protection responsibilities across federal, provincial and local levels, with local governments and designated child protection structures expected to play a central role in identifying vulnerable children, supporting families, determining appropriate care and monitoring placements.

Despite this foundation, Nepal does not yet have a comprehensive national childcare reform strategy that connects prevention of family separation, family strengthening, gatekeeping, kinship care, foster care, guardianship, residential care, reintegration and transition from care within one coherent reform framework. Available information is concentrated on registered childcare homes, while significantly less is known about children in kinship and informal care, foster care, guardianship, unregistered or inadequately regulated residential facilities, supported independent living and other arrangements that could be operating in practice. Evidence is also limited on the factors driving separation, the quality and outcomes of placements, the effectiveness of case management and reintegration, the situation of children with disabilities, and the experiences of children and care leavers.

Alternative care in Nepal is shaped by poverty and economic vulnerability, migration and parental absence, disability-related exclusion, family violence, emergencies, loss of parental care, and uneven access to inclusive social services. Informal family and community arrangements remain significant, while formal family-based options are still developing. Residential care remains prominent, with continuing concerns regarding unnecessary placement, long stays, inconsistent gatekeeping, family contact and reintegration planning, financing incentives, quality of care, safeguarding, licensing, monitoring and accountability.

The Government of Nepal, with support from UNICEF, therefore, intends to undertake a national mapping and assessment of the alternative care system. The assignment will take stock of the current landscape, generate an evidence base across the full continuum of care, identify system strengths and gaps, and provide practical recommendations to inform a comprehensive National Childcare Reform Strategy and phased implementation roadmap.

The purpose of this assignment is to map and assess the alternative care landscape in Nepal and use the evidence generated to inform a comprehensive and actionable National Childcare Reform Strategy and phased implementation roadmap. The assignment will be undertaken in two linked phases by an International Consultant

and a National Consultant. In Phase 1, the International Consultant will lead the national mapping and functional assessment of the alternative care system, with support from the National Consultant. In Phase 2, the National Consultant will lead the development of the draft National Childcare Reform Strategy and implementation roadmap, based on the validated findings and recommendations, with technical support from the International Consultant. This ToR covers the National Consultant.

Scope of Work

Phase 1 – Mapping and assessment (led by the International Consultant, with support from the National Consultant)

Mapping: The mapping will establish the current alternative care landscape in Nepal, documenting formal and informal arrangements, including residential care, family-based care such as kinship care, foster care, community-based care and supported independent living. It will record their geographic coverage, capacity, legal and registration status, staffing, care practices, funding sources, financing arrangements, gatekeeping and placement mechanisms, oversight, and available data on children in care. Creches, day-care centres and related family-support services will also be mapped, distinguishing them from alternative care arrangements.

Assessment: Building on this baseline, the assessment will analyse the effectiveness, appropriateness and quality of care and the system's capacity to prevent unnecessary separation and institutionalization and prioritize family-based alternative care, when alternative care is necessary. It will examine gaps between law, policy and practice; workforce capacity; financing adequacy and sustainability; and governance, coordination, regulation, safeguarding and accountability across federal, provincial and local levels. It will assess decision-making throughout children's care pathways, including placement, care planning, periodic review, family contact, reunification, reintegration, transition to independent living and aftercare, identifying factors contributing to unnecessary placement, prolonged stays and re-entry into care.

Children and families: The assessment will reflect the needs and experiences of children in care, children at risk of separation and their families, with attention to disability, migration, marginalization, emergencies and leaving care. Consultations will be voluntary, ethical, accessible and child-friendly, supported by robust safeguarding and referral arrangements.

The mapping and assessment will cover the following areas:

- The legal, policy and regulatory framework and its alignment with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the 2019 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on Children without Parental Care, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Constitution of Nepal, the Act Relating to Children (2018), the Rules Relating to Children (2022) and other relevant legislation.
- The profile and needs of children without adequate parental care and children at risk of separation, including the drivers and pathways leading to placement and the extent to which separation could be prevented through family support and inclusive services.
- All alternative care options available in law, policy and practice, including kinship care, informal and formal - alternative care, foster care, residential care (registered and unregistered), supported independent living and other arrangements identified through the mapping; their scale, distribution, accessibility, strengths, capacity and gaps.
- The roles, responsibilities, capacity and accountability of federal, provincial and local government institutions, the National Child Rights Council, child rights committees, local governments, child welfare authorities/officers, courts, social workers, service providers and civil society.

- The functioning of gatekeeping, including identification, assessment, referral, authorization of placement, case management, care planning, periodic review and decisions on continuation, change or termination of placement.
- Prevention and family strengthening services, including social protection, parenting and psychosocial support, disability-inclusive services, creches and day-care, education, health, livelihood and community-based interventions that enable children to remain safe in family care.
- Financing arrangements and funding flows, including public, donor and private funding of residential care, and opportunities to shift investment towards prevention and family-based care.
- The quality, appropriateness and safeguarding of care, including standards, registration, licensing, inspection, complaints, incident reporting, family contact, sibling relationships, child participation, cultural identity, health, mental well-being and preparation for adulthood.
- Family tracing, reunification and reintegration processes, including assessment, preparation, support, follow-up, placement stability and prevention of re-entry into care.
- Administrative and case-level data systems, information management and record keeping, and opportunities to strengthen evidence generation and monitoring.
- Priority legal, policy, institutional, service-delivery, workforce, financing, data and social-norm reforms to inform the National Childcare Reform Strategy.

Phase 2 – Development of the National Childcare Reform Strategy (led by the National Consultant, with support from the International Consultant)

Building on the validated mapping and assessment, and with the support of International Consultant, the National Consultant will lead the development of a draft National Childcare Reform Strategy and phased implementation roadmap. The Strategy will provide a single, government-owned framework for progressively shifting Nepal's care system from reliance on residential care towards prevention of family separation, family strengthening and family-based care.

The Strategy will set out a vision, guiding principles, strategic objectives and priority result areas. These will cover prevention and family strengthening; gatekeeping and case management; expansion of kinship, foster and other family-based care; regulation, quality and progressive transformation of residential care; reunification, reintegration and support to care leavers; and the workforce, financing, data, governance and accountability arrangements needed across federal, provincial and local levels. It will be aligned with the Act Relating to Children (2018), the Rules Relating to Children (2022) and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

The roadmap will sequence immediate, medium- and longer-term actions, with responsibilities, milestones, resource implications, risks and monitoring indicators. The Strategy will be developed through a government-led, consultative process involving federal, provincial and local governments, the National Child Rights Council, civil society, care providers, children and care leavers, and will be validated before approval and endorsement by the Government.

The intended outcome is a clear national picture of alternative care in Nepal and a validated draft National Childcare Reform Strategy and implementation roadmap, including alternative care placement, that enables the Government to progressively prevent unnecessary family separation, prevent institutionalization, strengthen family-based care, improve the quality and oversight of short-term care arrangements, and ensure that decisions and services are guided by the best interests and rights of each child.

Division of roles: The National Consultant will lead the development of the National Childcare Reform Strategy and implementation roadmap (Phase 2) and is accountable for the strategy framework, consultations, drafts and validated final draft, with the International Consultant providing technical guidance, international good practice

and quality assurance. In Phase 1, the National Consultant will support the mapping and assessment led by the International Consultant, contributing the national legal and policy review, tool translation, field data collection and stakeholder engagement. Both consultants will work as one team under the guidance of UNICEF Nepal and in close coordination with the Government of Nepal, including the National Child Rights Council.

Key Tasks:

- Support the desk review and stakeholder mapping, including a review of national and provincial legislation, policies, guidelines and available administrative data, as inputs to the inception report.
- Adapt, translate and pilot the data collection tools in Nepali, and support the ethical clearance process.
- Coordinate and conduct field data collection in selected provinces and local governments under the technical direction of the International Consultant, including key informant interviews, facility visits and consultations with children and families, applying the agreed safeguarding and referral protocols.
- Compile and clean administrative and field data, and contribute to the analysis and drafting of the Mapping and System Assessment Report.
- Organize and co-facilitate the technical and national validation workshops, and document stakeholder feedback.
- Lead the development of the draft National Childcare Reform Strategy, based on the validated findings and recommendations, through a government-led consultative process with federal, provincial and local governments, civil society, care providers, children and care leavers, with technical support from the International Consultant.
- Develop a phased implementation roadmap with priority actions, responsibilities, milestones, resource implications, risks and monitoring indicators.
- Facilitate validation of the draft strategy and roadmap, and finalize them for submission to the Government.

Work Assignments Overview	**Deliverables/Outputs**	**Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable**
Support the desk review and stakeholder mapping, including a review of national and provincial legislation, policies, guidelines and available administrative data, as inputs to the inception report.	National legal, policy and data review and stakeholder mapping, incorporated into the approved inception report.	31 December 2026
Adapt, translate and pilot the data collection tools in Nepali, and support the ethical clearance process.	Translated and piloted tools, with a brief pilot note.	28 February 2027
Coordinate and conduct field data collection in selected provinces and local governments under the technical direction of the International Consultant, applying the agreed safeguarding	Field data collection completed, with field report, cleaned datasets, interview notes and a mapping database of care arrangements and services.	31 March 2027

and referral protocols.		
Contribute to the analysis and drafting of the mapping and assessment report, including the national context, legal and institutional sections.	Written contributions incorporated into the draft National Alternative Care Mapping and System Assessment Report.	15 May 2027
Organize and co-facilitate the technical and national validation workshops, document stakeholder feedback and support report finalization.	Workshop proceedings and documented feedback, incorporated into the validation report.	30 June 2027
Development of the outline of the strategy, setting out the proposed vision, principles, strategic objectives and result areas, based on the validated findings and recommendations.	Approved strategy framework and outline for the National Childcare Reform Strategy.	31 July 2027
Lead consultations with federal, provincial and local governments, civil society, care providers, children and care leavers to develop the draft strategy and phased implementation roadmap, with technical support from the International Consultant.	Draft National Childcare Reform Strategy and phased implementation roadmap.	15 August 2027
Facilitate validation of the draft strategy and roadmap, and revise them based on stakeholder feedback.	Validated and final draft National Childcare Reform Strategy and implementation roadmap, ready for Government endorsement, with validation report.	30 September 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

- Minimum requirements:
- **Education**: Master`s university degree in in social work, child protection, social policy, public policy, law, sociology, development studies, public administration or another relevant field. A first university degree combined with substantial additional relevant experience may be considered in accordance with applicable UNICEF requirements.

- **Work Experience:**
  At least 8 years of progressively responsible experience in child protection, alternative care, social welfare or related fields in Nepal. Demonstrated experience in developing national policies, strategies or plans with the Government of Nepal, and in conducting field research and consultations with children and families.

- **Language Requirements:**
  Fluency in Nepali and English, with excellent analytical, facilitation and report-writing skills in both languages.

- **Knowledge/Expertise/Skills:**
  Strong knowledge of Nepal's child protection legal and institutional framework, including the Constitution of Nepal, the Act Relating to Children (2018) and the Rules Relating to Children (2022), and of roles and

responsibilities across federal, provincial and local governments. Good knowledge of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Experience in ethical research with children and disability-inclusive approaches.

- **Desirables:**
  Experience working with the National Child Rights Council, child rights committees or local government social development sections of Civil Society Organisations ; experience in care reform, family reintegration or deinstitutionalization programming.

- **Technical requirements**: Technical proposal

  The technical proposal should demonstrate understanding of the assignment and of Nepal's alternative care context; describe the proposed approach to field data collection and to leading a consultative strategy development process, including ethics and safeguarding; and include examples of comparable work and relevant writing samples in English and Nepali.