

CONSULTANCY – CALL FOR PROPOSALS

RESEARCH REPORT – EXAMINING HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING EFFORTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE AND IDENTIFYING GLOBAL GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic and the response both present huge challenges to health systems everywhere, threatening children's lives. However, The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) believe they also present a window of opportunity for the global health community to leverage the response to strengthen health systems globally both in order to better fight the pandemic now, and to protect children's lives into the future.

The context in which we might seize this opportunity is clearly challenging. Essential health care services have been disrupted globally, with devastating results for all including the world's children. The COVID-19 vaccine roll out is disrupting, and will inevitably continue to damage, existing health services and increase the burden on existing immunization systems and health workers. Preventing severe disruption and mitigating damage caused by the COVID-19 response should be an immediate priority of the World Health Organisation and the global health multilaterals that have come together to create the Access to COVID- 19 Tools – Accelerator (referred to in this ToR as the Global Health Architecture). But so must efforts for broader system strengthening. This could be a once in a generation opportunity, as the world grapples with the importance of pandemic preparedness, to move the needle on the need for and importance of prioritizing health system strengthening and building primary health care to advance towards universal health coverage.

The Global Health Architecture must use its comparative advantages to ensure health systems are able to deliver COVID-19 tools to all who require them, while also simultaneously ensuring they are able to restart and catch-up on many services, including routine immunization, that have been stalled and stopped due the impact of the pandemic. The scale of what the Global Health Architecture must deliver – preventing overburdening, providing catch up, and embedding and investing in sustainability is daunting, but essential for recovery.

This research resulting from this consultancy will help build an understanding for the global health community of how the COVID-19 pandemic can act as a catalyst for health system strengthening everywhere, and what the limitations are in current efforts to strengthen health systems that need to be overcome to achieve this.

Purpose of Post

UNICEF UK is seeking an expert in health systems strengthening policy with a solid understanding of the international COVID-19 response and the Global Health Architecture delivering it. The consultant will conduct a detailed research investigation, using a literature review and key informant interviews targeting stakeholders within the Global Health Architecture, to examine and distill health systems strengthening efforts within the international COVID-19 response by and within the Global Health Architecture (looking at coordination, policy, structures, financing etc.). Where possible, the research should also be informed by and draw on previous efforts to further health system strengthening following emergencies and disease outbreaks (e.g. Ebola).

This work will support UNICEF UK to develop a deeper understanding of how the international COVID-19 response is supporting efforts to strengthen health systems both for now and for the future, where there are gaps and what these are and what opportunities currently exist or could be created to further strengthen health systems at this pivotal time.

The consultant will be expected to produce a short internal report which summarizes their findings and offers concise recommendations of how multilaterals and governments can accelerate and intensify health systems strengthening efforts that can be used by UNICEF UK in our advocacy work.

Duration

The consultant is expected to start work no later than 7th June, working up to a total of 20 days. Exact working pattern will be negotiated prior to contractual agreement.

Scope of work

The consultant will be expected to:

- Review relevant literature and conduct a series of interviews with experts within the health system strengthening and international COVID-19 response sectors, following an agreed interview guide.
- Provide a detailed mapping (likely in table form) of efforts within the Global Health Architecture (including ACT-A as whole, other individual efforts of organizations partnering within ACT-A and relevant others) to strengthen health systems in the context of COVID-19, including the financing landscape and commitments, based on a review of the available literature and inputs from key informants.
- Identify and articulate policy and funding shortcomings, gaps and weaknesses in efforts to strengthen health systems as part of the international COVID-19 response.
- Identify and articulate findings on how the COVID-19 response can be delivered equitably and to best prevent disruptions to health systems.
- Identify and articulate opportunities that are currently being missed to strengthen health systems and potential opportunities in order to build a set of recommendations for all stakeholders involved in the international COVID-19 response around what is possible.
- Summarize key findings and recommendations in a short internal report that can be used as the basis for future UNICEF UK advocacy work in this area.

Research questions to address (final questions, method, scope and approach to be tailored following discussion with successful consultant):

1. Prior the COVID-19 pandemic, how and to what extent was the global health architecture collaborating and delivering on health system strengthening, and what did best practice look like?
2. How have the pre-existing health system strengthening efforts of the global health architecture been affected by the COVID-19 response and the creation and work of ACT-A?
3. How is ACT-A now affecting health systems and national health financing flows for health systems from a multilateral and sustainability perspective?
4. What are the strengths and limitations of the approach now being taken by the global health architecture, and particularly those partnering to deliver ACT-A, for supporting health systems so that they can deliver the COVID-19 vaccines and other technologies?
5. What are the strengths and limitations of the approach now being taken by the global health architecture, and particularly those partnering to deliver ACT-A for embedding and furthering the health systems strengthening agenda and health systems strengthening progress in the COVID-19 response?
 - a. What is the current approach to funding for health systems strengthening within and beyond the pandemic response and what are the resourcing gaps?

6. What are the opportunities to further strengthen health systems now to equitably deliver COVID-19 tools without disruption and damage and for the future through and within the COVID-19 response?
7. Which investments being made to respond to COVID-19 offer the greatest opportunity to strengthen health systems in the long term and how can they be expanded for sustainable impact?

Key Competencies

- Expert knowledge on health system strengthening and understanding of the international COVID-19 response infrastructure and architecture.
- Strong relationships with key stakeholders working on health systems strengthening within the Global Health Architecture.
- Quantitative and qualitative research and analysis skills.
- Proven experience in delivering evidence-based research reports.
- Excellent research and writing skills, with the ability to effectively distill, condense, summarize and communicate complicated concepts clearly.
- Experience in developing policy advocacy recommendations for stakeholders including donors and multilaterals

Timeline

The broad, expected timeframe for this project is set out below:

Deadline for Proposals	28 th May 23.59 BST*
Interviews	2 nd June
Consultancy begins	No later than 14 th June
All work delivered	No later than end of July

*We will interview prospective applicants on a rolling basis and may appoint before the deadline.

Your proposal

Please submit a brief proposal that includes:

- A brief summary of your experience and suitability for the role
- A CV
- An example of past work such as papers or research reports authored
- A summary of your proposed approach to this consultancy
- A proposed budget

The deadline for proposals is 28th May 2021. Please submit all proposals to Jenny Vaughan (Senior Policy Advisor – Child Health) at jennyv@unicef.org.uk

Contact

If you would like more information on the research or for an informal discussion, please contact Jenny Vaughan at jennyv@unicef.org.uk or on +44 20 3965 4575