

## Terms of Reference for Institutional Contracts

Seeking technical support for developing Play kits and matching APP for ‘Community-based support for early learning and responsive care for children aged 0–6 years in China’ project

### 1. Background of the project

Many young children in China are deprived of the best possible start in life, especially those who live in remote parts of rural China or are affected by migration. Disparities emerge early on, with around 6.7 million children aged 3 and 4 having poor cognitive and/or socio-emotional development.<sup>1</sup> Many of these children live in and belong to communities of ethnic minorities and are affected by poverty and/or migration, they are either left behind by migrating parents or are migrating with their parents. They face major educational, health and economic disparities. Caregivers, families and communities play the most important role in the early years of a child’s life, but they often lack the knowledge, skills and resources to best support their child’s development. Demand for early learning and care support services is high, but access is limited by availability and affordability, disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged children.

To ensure that all children – particularly the most disadvantaged in China – are given equal opportunities during the early, formative years of life; the proposed project seeks to engender positive behaviour change among caregivers to better support child development. This includes Learning through Play (LtP), and the development of sustainable systems for scalable community-based family support (CBFS) services. In partnership with the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF), and building on past project work and learning from the LEGO Foundation - supported projects, the project will entail working closely with the local government, university experts, childcare service providers, communities and families to improve CBFS services. It will employ a sustainable capacity development model, whereby cascade training and on-line support will be provided to practitioners, combined with the provision of play materials, online demonstration and mini classes to guide local practitioners.

Community-based implementation will focus on children and their caregivers in 200 disadvantaged rural communities and communities with a high proportion of children affected by migration across 10 provinces and autonomous regions: Gansu, Guizhou, Hebei, Hubei, Hunan, Inner Mongolia, Jiangxi, Shanxi, Sichuan and Yunnan. These project CBFS centres will operate as demonstration models and help to build an evidence base to support wider advocacy efforts for possible national scale-up. As a result of the project, an estimated 20,000 children aged 0–6 years and their 40,000 caregivers across the 200 communities will benefit directly from access to better-quality CBFS services, improved parenting practices and behaviours and use of age-appropriate play materials. An estimated 50,000 children aged 0–6 years and 95,000 caregivers will indirectly benefit through access to improved quality of CBFS services at non-project ACWF ECD centres in project provinces.

The outcome of this project is:

By 2025, national and selected provincial governments and other partners would have strengthened capacities to deliver community-based early learning and responsive care services at scale for more girls and boys aged 0-6, especially those left behind;

Expected outputs/deliverables of the proposed project are:

- Resource development: Package of resources to support early learning and responsive care (ELRC) at the community level is to be developed and made available for replication and potential scale-up.
- Building sustainable national and provincial support systems for CBFS services: National and provincial expert teams are to improve the knowledge of and competencies in ELRC to promote LtP.
- Strengthened family-support services in communities: Service providers in selected communities are to be able to better provide quality ELRC support to children aged 0–6 and their caregivers, including by helping caregivers improve their play-centred parenting skills.
- Advocacy for replication and scaling-up: Documented evidence and lessons learned are to be disseminated to influence decisions for wider scale-up and contribute to the development of national family education legislation.

The project will demonstrate a model for effective community-based support to drive behaviour change among caregivers. The model and the evidence generated from it will subsequently be leveraged to advocate for enhanced awareness of scientific early childhood development (ECD) with LtP and provision of CBFS services at scale. In doing so, it will nurture advocates at community, county, provincial and national levels and generate evidence to support wider-scale government-led change to ensure ECD services are available to all children, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. This project proposal was designed based on UNICEF-ACWF’s previous experiences, a strong component of developing buy-in and ownership across multiple levels is by working with ACWF as an implementing partner and using its existing network and government influence to strengthen CBFS within China and influence government decision-making through its government advisory and policy implementation support role.

<sup>1</sup> McCoy, D.C., et al., ‘Early Childhood Developmental Status in Low- and Middle-income Countries: National, regional, and global prevalence estimates using predictive modelling’, PLOS Medicine, vol. 14, no. 1, 2016.

## 2. Purposes/Objectives

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this consultancy is to develop a play kits set and its matching APP, which can promote the awareness and skills of caregivers, helping them to create supportive and simulative family environment and make use of age-appropriate toys and home materials to better interact with their children, and finally help children to achieve their potentials.

### **Objective:**

The play kits and APP to be designed as a resource set for children aged 0-6 and their caregivers to meet the above mentioned needs, which include specific goals, contents, materials and guide, and they are also convenient for frontline volunteers to use and guide caregivers to improve their skills and knowledges on early learning and responsive cares to:

- help parents create supportive and simulative family environment and make use of age-appropriate toys and home materials to better interact with their children, and finally help children to achieve their full potentials.
- To use as training packages for the project experts and frontline volunteers, helping to build up stable professional team to support the improvement of parents' knowledge and skills and the overall development of 0-6 children sustainably.
- Collect data to support the sustainable and efficient development of project with the trial of data deep mining and analysis.

## 3. Scope of Work and Expected Deliverables

The key deliverables should include:

1. A research report to justify the play kits's relevance and its effectiveness;
2. A set of play kits (approximately 60-100 games to cover the main development areas including social emotional development, physical development, language development, science development)
3. One facilitators training manual for expert team and frontline ECD workers;
4. One caregivers booklets for awareness raising and use of play kits,
5. Play kits APP (with management and learning functions)

**Research and demonstration report:** The report should reflect the rationale and evidence for play based learning, and justifying play kits is designed to help local government partner, ECD frontline workers and caregivers to understand how children could learning-through play, especially how the play kits will contribute to children's play during daily routines, and how they play during learning experiences that the play kits provide. The report should also explain how play is filled with opportunities for children to learn and develop new skills, and how children play and use all their senses – hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, smelling and moving – to gather information about their world.

**Play kits:** Play kits should be designed with consisting of age appropriate LtP (learning through play) materials (toys, play equipment and books); it should compose independent games to cover main development areas including social emotional development, physical development, language development, science development etc., and act as the medium to convey knowledge by scanning the tagged codes to link to the information pool integrated with nutrition, healthy diet, positive parenting, especially the importance of father's involvement in early learning and responsive care, social and emotional support and children protection etc. It should also meet below requirement of use:

- 1) It should be designed to support parent-children interaction at CBFS centres or at home -- that children and parents can play together independently or with the guidance of CBFS center volunteers.
- 2) It will be used as a key training material to train frontline workers/volunteers of the CBFS center to promote scientific ECD knowledge among families and parents/caregivers.
- 3) The material used in the play kits should be easily replaceable and low cost, at least 50% of the games can be configured locally.

**Facilitators training manual:** the manual should be developed to accompany the play kits and the APP, and used as a training tool, which can help the trainers or ECD frontline workers to understand the use of the play kits, the manual should include:

- 1) Explain why the play kits and APP were introduced into the CBFS center.
- 2) The purpose of each training workshop and each session's learning goals, and theme needed for each session,
- 3) PowerPoint Presentation with detailed notes for facilitators,
- 4) Suggested activities and activity guide, which should include detailed guidelines for implementing the activities in the module,
- 5) Resource list for facilitators as useful tools listing all the materials and activities in each session.

**Caregivers booklets:** the booklets should be developed to support the caregivers to improve the knowledges and skills in early learning and responsive cares by using the play kits and the app. It should include:

- 1) Basic knowledge on early learning, brain development and responsive care
- 2) Tips for each game, including children's age range for each game, development goals and category of development area.
- 3) Learning objectives for caregivers and for children
- 4) Safety precautions
- 5) Language of this booklet should be designed as user's friendly and easy to understand

**Play kit APP:** An app to be innovatively designed to complement the play kits. It should be able to: (1) provide caregivers with ideas and guidance on how to organise play-based activities at home as well as information on ELRC (early learning and responsive care); (2) support frontline workers to manage play kits; (3) be used to collect data for analysis and adjustment; and (4) be an experience and knowledge-sharing platform for experts, workers and parents/caregivers, and will include guides, visuals and videos.

**Please note:** Play kits and the matching app can also be used by other service providers, such as MCH service providers and social service workers working with children and caregivers in the project communities. The project will train these other service providers on how to use

the kit and app, which will support integrated ECD programming.

The suitable candidate should provide a table of tasks by phase, and deliverables with timeframe along with the proposal.

The payment of consultation fee is dependent on the satisfactory completion of deliverables by phase, as indicated in the Section of Description of Assignment.

(\*National consultants/contractors are to be paid in local currency. UNICEF will not bear bank charges for transferring hard currency abroad for int'l consultants/contractors)

**4. Funding Source: LEGO**

**5. Content of technical proposal**

**Structure of the Technical Proposal**

The Technical Proposal should include but not limited to the following:

- 1) Background review, description of the initial design of the play kits and matching APP based on the understanding of the 'Community-based support for early learning and responsive care for children aged 0–6 years in China' project proposal and the requirement of this TOR (2 pages)
- 2) Detailed methodology/approach to demonstrating how you will meet or exceed UNICEF requirements for this assignment, including a) framework on the play kits and APP, b) justifying how your design will support or benefit caregivers and ECD frontline workers, c) description of how you are plan to step by step carry out this assignment, a table should be provided to include tasks by phase, deliverable in each phase and timeline for each phase; d) quality assurance processes; and e) description of the limitations or risks, may occur and its mitigation measures. (6 pages, maximum)
- 3) Detailed description of the bidding institution's own ethical review procedures in compliance with UNICEF's ethics standards, or willingness to specifically include such procedures for the assignment<sup>2</sup>. (1 page)
- 4) Corporate profile highlighting the bidder's qualifications and experience in implementing the assignment, please include details of specific experience with similar assignments in the past five years. Bidders are requested to back up their submissions by providing:
  - o Evidence in the form of job completion certificate, contracts and/or references.
  - o Details of the proposed team for the assignment including the following information:
    - Title/designation of each team member on the project
    - Educational qualifications and professional experiences
    - Experience in working on similar project and assignment – List all similar projects they worked on and their roles on those projects.

The format shown below should be used in preparing the price schedule. The format includes specific expenditures, which may or may not be required or applicable but are indicated to serve as examples.

| PRICE SCHEDULE |                                       |                 |           |                  |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|
|                | DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY/ITEM          | NUMBER OF STAFF | UNIT RATE | ESTIMATED AMOUNT |
| 1              | Services/consultation                 |                 |           |                  |
| 2              | Travel (including per diem allowance) |                 |           |                  |
| 3              | Reproduction and reports              |                 |           |                  |
| 4              | Other items                           |                 |           |                  |
|                |                                       |                 |           |                  |

**Duty station:** The workplace of the research team.

**Duration:** 24 months in total.

Expected start date: 15th May 2021

Expected completion date: 15th May 2023

**Travel Required:** Field trips to the project sites for testing the play kits and training.

<sup>2</sup> Specifically, proposals should:

- a. Identify any potential ethical issues and explain how these will be addressed, including:
  - Measures to ensure that the selection of participants and sampling will promote equity
  - Potential harms and risks to the safety and well-being of participants or their communities, and how these will be prevented or mitigated
  - The nature of informed consent by participants, and the measures that will be taken to obtain it
  - The measures to ensure privacy and confidentiality in data collection, analysis and storage
  - Explanation and justification of payment or other compensation to participants.
- b. Identify any actual or potential conflicts of interest, and if these exist, indicate how they would be managed.
- c. Describe the process for ethical review and oversight of data collection and analysis.
- d. Indicate that data collectors and others involved in the study will have completed basic ethics training before the commencement of activities. (UNICEF China can provide information and suggestions for basic ethics training.)

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| <p><b>Support Provided by UNICEF:</b> UNICEF will supervise the assignment and facilitate discussion with the government counterparts and experts.</p>  |
| <p><b>Supervisor:</b> Education specialist, UNICEF China</p>  |
| <p><b>Type of Supervision Required:</b> Regular review of progress and technical advice.</p>  |
| <p><b>6. Documents/Information Available to Candidates:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Proposals for 'Community-based support for early learning and responsive care for children aged 0–6 years in China'</li> <li>2) Mid-term review of the 0-3 community based ECD project</li> <li>3) UNICEF Ethical Guidelines</li> <li>4) Tools and materials developed by this project</li> <li>5) List of project sites</li> </ol>   |
| <p><b>7. Qualification or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required for the Assignment:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) University or research institute with proven knowledge, reserach background and relevant experience.</li> <li>2) Leading person and the working team members with degree in early childhood development/education</li> <li>3) Leading person with 10 years of applied experience in ECD, preferably in early learning in particularly experiences in 0-6 ECD field are as asset, including designing and leading game designing and preparing report</li> <li>4) Leading person and team members with appropriate ICT skills, including competence in using statistical software (e.g. SPSS), MS Office especially EXCEL</li> <li>5) Leading person and team members familiar with the child rights based and gender sensitive approach to applied to this assignment.</li> <li>6) Previous experience working with UNICEF (UN) and/or with local governments an asset</li> <li>7) Fluency in Chinese and working knowledge of English required, proficiency in English an asset</li> </ol>   |
| <p><b>8. Evaluation criteria</b></p> <p>The evaluation procedure will focus on both technical and financial suitability. The weights of 70% and 30% shall be applied for technical and financial compliance respectively. Only organizations scoring at least 70% of the maximum score during technical evaluation will be considered for financial evaluation.</p> <p><u>Technical Evaluation Criteria</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall response - 10 points <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Completeness of response - 5 points</li> <li>1.2. Overall concord between RFP requirements and proposal - 5 points</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Proposed methodology and approach - 30 points <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Relevance and quality of proposed methodology - 20 points</li> <li>2.2 Project timelines and workplan - 10 points</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Experience and qualifications of organization and key personnel - 30 points <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1. Organization profile (establishment, facilities, personnel, financial capacity) - 5 points</li> <li>3.2 Experience in similar projects - 15 points</li> <li>3.3. Relevance of qualifications &amp; expertise of proposed team of consultants - 10 points</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><u>Total technical: 70 points</u></p>                                |
| <p><b>9. Award Criteria</b></p> <p>The following methodology will be used for evaluation of price proposals and contract award. Only price proposals of the technically responsive Offerors will be opened and evaluated.</p> <p>The price should be broken down for each component of the proposed work. The total amount of points allocated for the price component is 30. The maximum number of points will be allotted to the lowest price proposal that is opened and compared among those invited organizations/institutions which obtain the threshold points in the evaluation of the technical component. All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price; e.g.:</p> $\text{Score for price proposal X} = \frac{30 * \text{Price of lowest priced proposal}}{\text{Price of proposal X}}$ <p>All prices/rates quoted must be exclusive of all taxes as UNICEF is a tax-exempt organization.</p> <p>The proposal obtaining the overall highest score after adding the scores for the technical and financial proposals is the proposal that offers best value for money.</p> <p>UNICEF will award the contract to the vendor whose response is of high quality, clear and meets the project goals. The price/cost of each of the technically compliant proposals shall be considered only upon evaluation of the above technical criteria.</p> |

**Prepared by** Zhao Qi, Education Officer

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Reviewed by:** Sanaullah Panezai, Chief of Education Section

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** 13th April 2021

**Cleared by:** Ding Yan, Supply & Procurement Specialist

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Approved by** Cynthia McCaffrey, Representative

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FROM REPRESENTATIVE/OIC PRIOR TO INITIATING THE PROJECT.

ADD PAGES IF REQUIRED.

