

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Child Poverty in Urban China: A qualitative study ( Tier 2 )**

#### **A. Background**

UNICEF's mandate is to advocate for the protection of child rights, to help children meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Child poverty is a global issue, different from adult poverty. "Children experience poverty as being deprived in the immediate aspects of their lives, areas including nutrition, health, water, education, protection and shelter."<sup>1</sup> Even short episodes of poverty during childhood hinder children's physical and cognitive development, and imposes risks for capability development, thus increasing the probability for future poverty and disadvantages (Espíndola Advis & Rico, 2012).

Rapid economic growth in China has lifted 800 million people out of poverty in the last four decades (World Bank, 2018), but progress has been impeded by the growing income inequalities between the urban, coastal areas and the rural, inland regions, and between different social groups. As China strives to eradicate extreme (rural) poverty by 2020, UNICEF is working closely with the government to prioritize children in its upcoming national strategy for poverty reduction and development. In addition to promoting the understanding of poverty as multidimensional deprivations, another focus of our advocacy is to look beyond the rural at child poverty in different settings, including the previously overlooked urban areas.

However, while extreme poverty remains a rural phenomenon, urbanization and migration hide deep pockets of poverty from view. Poverty in urban settings has seldom been looked at as China is fighting to eradicate extreme rural poverty by 2020. UNICEF China estimated the number of children living in poor rural households, at about eight million, or 3.9%<sup>1</sup> of rural children. But there is a lack of research and official statistics showing how many children live in poverty in urban China (SOS Children's Village, 2018).

Most studies of childhood poverty in China have been quantitative and approach the topic through the lenses of the household and adults rather than through the eyes of children (for example, Qi and Wu, 2014; Wang et al., 2015; Wu and Qi, 2016). Children's experiences and perspectives of poverty have also been largely neglected in policy-making, which implies a lack of respect or recognition that children are competent in shaping their experiences and interpretations of poverty.

The proposed study is intended to fill the gaps in knowledge and evidence on urban child poverty in China which puts children's experience and perspectives at the centre. Findings will be used to inform UNICEF and its partners' strategy planning for incorporating child poverty, including urban child poverty, in China's poverty reduction strategy and actions beyond 2020. This exploratory study is also expected to inspire further research on child poverty in urban settings in

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<sup>1</sup> National Bureau of Statistics, Poverty Monitoring Report of Rural China, 2018.

China and inform UNICEF's programming strategies in urban settings under its new country programme cycle.

## **B. Existing information**

Existing studies have largely concentrated on the measurement of child poverty from the household income perspective, applying various income poverty lines. Some have used the minimum living standard guarantee to measure child poverty, while others have employed a relative income poverty line defined as 50% of median household income (e.g. Qi and Wu, 2015; Chen et al., 2005; and Lu and Wei 2002).

There are a few studies that have analysed child poverty from a multidimensional perspective. These studies mainly added consideration of education and health to the usual focus on household income (Wu and Qi, 2016). The emotional and relational dimensions of poverty have mostly been overlooked.

At the global level, evidence suggests that poverty is as psychologically painful for children as it is for adults, that children are subject to abuse and bullying from peers, their potential is underestimated by teachers and that the experience of poverty is detrimental to life achievements with one underlying mechanism, which is their negative self-image (Chase and Walker, 2013; Furukawa et al., 2012; Ben-Arieh, 2014; Zhang, 2016; Bantebya et al., in press; Ge, 2017).

Moreover, poverty is found to be detrimental to parent-child relationships, with children having conflicting opinions of their parents who they see as both the source of their poverty and their prime carers; children actively claim a disproportionate share of family resources but also learn to temper their claims and dampen their expectations (Dornan and Portela, 2015; Walker et al., 1994; Shropshire and Middleton, 1999). Parents under pressure dictate rather than explain and resort to force and even violence more readily than more affluent parents (Katz et al, 2007; Gelders, 2018). Poverty in more affluent urban areas may exert additional trauma through experience of relative deprivation (Walker, 2014).

## **C. Motivation and Theory of Change**

China's poverty alleviation approach has been growth-driven, and poverty monitoring is mostly restricted to rural communities. Challenges for the current national campaign to prioritize child poverty and address it from a child rights perspective include but are not limited to the definition of poverty and of the subject of poverty. To the extent that children experience poverty differentially from adults and prioritize different dimensions of poverty, children are seldom treated as subjects of poverty and involved in the design and decision-making process of poverty alleviation solutions. Furthermore, existing "multidimensional" quantitative measurement of child poverty in China has not addressed children's experience of poverty in urban settings nor considered their everyday life and the dynamics of family life from a socio-psychological perspective. Given the rapid urbanization process and the continuing trend of internal migration in China, the above-mentioned limitations of how poverty and child poverty are seen in China would

impede the country's progress towards more effective eradication of poverty and inequalities and upholding the rights of all children.

In this context, the proposed study will make ground-breaking efforts in producing evidence which may lead to refinement of perceptions of child poverty in urban settings and of the role of children in poverty reduction processes, among the public, poverty researchers, the policy-making sphere and civil society players. Eventually, it is aimed to bring about changes in China's next generation of poverty reduction strategies and actions, to become more inclusive and empowering, and thus more effective in mitigating the impact of child poverty on children and the society as a whole.

#### **D. Purpose and objectives**

The study is intended to generate qualitative evidence on child poverty through a participatory approach. It will aim to bring the voices of children around poverty into the national debates on poverty in China through descriptive and ethnographic analysis of their lived experiences of poverty. This attempt is of strategic importance, as China's approach to poverty reduction and development beyond 2020 is currently being shaped and would likely move from addressing rural (income) poverty towards reducing relative poverty and inequalities between populations. The evidence will be used to support UNICEF's advocacy in dialogue with the government, as it sets national poverty, growth and development priorities beyond 2020. Specifically, the advocacy will aim to bring public and policy attention beyond rural children to look at poverty and inequalities that affect children across rural and urban settings. Findings can also be used to inform discussions and decisions around the future strategic direction of UNICEF China's country programme in its new cycle of 2021-2025, including the prospect of programming in urban settings. It is also anticipated that the study will inspire further research on the issue of child poverty in urban settings in China, and/or strengthen UNICEF China's child rights-based approach to programming by bringing children's voices into policy and programmes.

The objective is to understand how multidimensional poverty is perceived and experienced by different groups of children living in China's urban areas through the eyes and experiences of children themselves.

UNICEF, its government counterparts and other partners in China will be the primary users of the research findings. The UNICEF China Social Policy team convenes an informal group of Chinese poverty experts, including individuals who are regularly consulted by the government on policy development. They will be engaged, in an advisory role and are also potential channels to maximise the possibility that findings inform policy evolution in the context of China's closed-door policy environment. Key government stakeholders will also be engaged throughout the research and dissemination process, as target audience, for increased awareness and action on child poverty. Other audiences may include think tanks and the media.

## **E. Scope and focus**

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do children living in China's urban settings perceive and experience poverty?
2. Given that children in urban settings are not a homogeneous group, what factors, including but not limited to elements of social identity (e.g., age, sex, migrant status, household composition or physical ability), are determinants of a child's perception and experience of poverty?
3. What roles do parents, peers, and teachers play in shaping children's perceptions and experiences of poverty in urban settings?
4. How does poverty affect children's lives in urban areas, according to children themselves?

## **F. Methodology**

Qualitative research generates descriptive and explanatory data, rather than predicting causal relationships or quantifying variation. The fact that so little is known about urban children's experience of poverty and the nature of the topic justify adoption of a qualitative methodology.

The research team are expected to adopt qualitative and participatory instruments that are appropriate for capturing children's views and voices. Potential instruments may include semi-structured in-depth interviews, problem tree analysis, time use analysis, focus group discussions, and observation.

The study is expected to be carried out in selected communities in a mega city with large numbers of migrant population (e.g., Beijing and Shanghai) where diversity and heterogeneity of children living in urban settings can be well captured and analysed.

More details shall be elaborated in the research proposals submitted by interested research teams.

## **G. Ethics**

The study will adhere to the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2014). Specifically,

- The study's child-centred and participatory methodology is designed to ensure justice to children affected by the issue of poverty by empowering and respectful listening to children's views, perceptions, understandings and experiences of poverty.
- Informed and ongoing consent
  - Written, informed consent to participate in the study shall be sought from children and their parents/principal carers as well as from parents and teachers to participate in group discussions and interviews.
  - Participants, especially child participants, shall be informed about their right to dissent or withdraw from the study at any time.
- Privacy and confidentiality

- Personal information and data collected on the child and adult participants will be rigidly kept confidential. Children’s identities, such as their names, photographs and physical addresses, must not be given in situations where this could put them at risk. Permission must be sought to use children’s photographs or any personal information.
- In the event that disclosure of participatory video and photo is deemed necessary, specific consent shall be sought.
- Harms and benefits
  - The research team shall be aware of the risk stemming from using focus groups, including the impact on participating children’s relationships of sharing previously unknown information, and be prepared to avoid any stereotyping or even stigmatization of certain individuals or groups of children during and after the research process.
  - Group discussions and individual interviews shall be held in safe and private spaces with the presence of more than one researcher, preferably of different genders.
  - All researchers/interviewers who will directly be involved with children must receive training on UNICEF’s child safeguarding protocol. All researchers/interviewers and others involved in this study must complete basic ethics training prior to the commencement of the study. If they have not already done so, they can be referred to the Agora online module entitled “An Introduction to Ethics in Evidence Generation at UNICEF”.
  - UNICEF does not normally support any payment of compensation to informants/respondents involved in a study. In the event that such compensation is deemed necessary, the research team must sufficiently justify the likely nature of the compensation and ensure that it would not compromise the study’s quality and ethical compliance.
  - The research team must include in the research proposal and ethical approval document an agreed upon plan for responding to child safety concerns. Such a plan shall include solutions (e.g., referral services) to minimise or eliminate distress, and other psychological and social pressure or even harms that may be experienced by child participants during and after the research process.
- Conflict of interest
  - No conflict of interest is known or foreseen in the implementation of this study, or the use of its findings. The findings and relevant products of this study will not be used for any commercial purposes.
  - Findings from the research will be reported back to the school and to child and adult participants.
- Ethical approval for the research will be secured from an authorized academic institution (e.g., Beijing Normal University) before its commencement.

#### **H. Qualifications & experience required**

A qualified research team are expected to have the following capacities/experiences:

- The primary researcher(s) shall hold a doctoral degree in social sciences, with minimum ten years of qualitative research experience on topics related to poverty and inequality.

- The primary researcher(s) shall have good track records of conducting participatory research involving children, following appropriate child safeguarding protocols, and with good understanding of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- At least one of the primary researchers shall be a native Chinese speaker, who has rich experience in conducting qualitative research in China, and are sufficiently aware and sensitive to the local political, social and cultural contexts and norms in relation to age, gender, migration, ethnicity, disability, etc.
- The research team shall make efforts to obtain gender balance, and diversity in background of its team members, and ensure that the respect to diversity and equity is reflected in the study's design and the research process. It is expected that at least one of the research team members has expertise in gender analysis.
- The research team shall demonstrate excellent analytical skills and academic writing skills in both English and Chinese.

#### **I. Reference group**

- UNICEF' experts on child poverty in both the China Office, the East Asia Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) and Headquarters (HQ) will provide technical advice on the design and implementation of the study.
- A peer expert review panel consisting of (child) poverty researchers and policy experts will be convened to provide quality assurance of the study. Preferably the panel will also include at least one expert on gender and equity issues.
- Government ministries and officials involved in poverty reduction and child rights will be consulted during the research process.

#### **J. Dissemination and advocacy**

The study report will be published per UNICEF's publication policy and standards. Key findings generated by this study will be circulated to targeted stakeholders described above, through UNICEF China's partnerships and networks, by print and/or by digital means. The key findings will also be reproduced into advocacy materials that could be disseminated through various advocacy events, e.g., the (Inter)National Poverty Reduction Day event, and NWCCW's annual child rights think tank summit. UNICEF China will continue to identify appropriate windows of opportunities for child poverty advocacy in China where this study will be made use of. Data will also be used to ensure rigour and integrity underpin UNICEF's publicly-facing communications material promoting child rights and equity.

UNICEF China encourages the research team to develop a journal article based on the study report and submit it to a peer-reviewed journal. Any publication produced from the study report will adhere to UNICEF's publication policy and standards.

## K. Deliverables and Timeframe

- A refined and approved research proposal.
- The first draft of the full research report in both English and Chinese.
- The finalized research report in both English and Chinese, including proper acknowledgement/disclaimer about property rights.
- An Executive Summary in both Chinese and English as part of the final report. The summary should cover the background, purpose, objective, methodology, main findings and conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned (optional). It should be ideally 2-3 pages in length and able to stand-alone without reference to the rest of the report.
- Research/study working documents including but not limited to field notes and interview transcriptions.
- A journal article to be submitted to a peer-reviewed academic journal. (To be negotiated)

UNICEF policy and cooperation agreements require that the primary data collected in the course of surveys and other studies fully funded by UNICEF must be submitted to UNICEF, along with the narrative report and other deliverables.

The following stages in the research are anticipated.

[NOTE: The timeline may be subject to adjustment given the summer break of schools from mid-July through the end of August.]

Stage	Activity	Lapsed time (Month)
1	Bidding process	June 2019
2	Contract research team	July 2019
3	Refine and finalize research proposal	July - August 2019
4	Conduct field study	September 2019
5	Report development and review	October - December 2019
6	Report back of findings to participants	December 2019 – January 2020
7	Dissemination and uptake	January - December 2020

## L. Payment schedule

The total amount will be paid to the selected research team in three instalments as follows:

Deliverables Associated	Percentage	Time of Payment
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I: Upon receipt and approval of final research proposal	30%	September 2019
II: Upon receipt and acceptance of the first draft report	50%	November 2019
III: Upon receipt and approval of the final report along with field notes, interview transcripts and other relevant working records	20%	January 2020

### **M. Evaluation criteria**

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.

#### Technical Evaluation Criteria

1. Overall response - 10 points
  - 1.1 Completeness of response - 5 points
  - 1.2. Overall concord between RFP requirements and proposal - 5 points
  
2. Proposed methodology and approach - 30 points
  - 2.1 Relevance and quality of proposed methodology - 20 points
  - 2.2 Project timelines and workplan - 10 points
  
3. Experience and qualifications of organization and key personnel - 30 points
  - 3.1. Organization profile (establishment, facilities, personnel, financial capacity) - 5 points
  - 3.2. Experience in similar projects - 15 points
  - 3.3. Relevance of qualifications & expertise of proposed team of consultants - 10 points

Total technical: 70 points

## **N. Content of technical proposal**

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

- Organization 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;
- Details of the Proposed Team: For the assignment including title/designation of each team member and responsibilities in this assignment as well as their qualifications and expertise, including with similar assignments;
- Detailed Methodology/approach:
  - Develop a refined research matrix, to clearly describe overall flow and key stages of the process, and specify any key intermediate tasks to be carried out (such as meetings, consultation, field visits etc.)
  - Describe the overall methodological approach, any specific model to be adopted, and data collection methods (survey, interviews, observation, desk review, etc.);
- Implementation Plan and Timeframe: showing the detailed sequence and timeline for each activity;
- Ethical Review: Any activities in the proposed study design concerning primary data collection involving human subjects or the analysis of sensitive secondary data are subject to an ethical review. Please include a section that can clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the research/data collection process in the proposal;
- Any other documents that the bidder considers to be relevant (e.g., draft questionnaires, focus group discussion outline, etc.).

The Price Proposal shall include, but not limited to, the following:

The format shown on the following pages 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.

<b>PRICE SCHEDULE</b>
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DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY/ITEM		NUMBER OF STAFF	UNIT RATE CNY	ESTIMATED AMOUNT CNY
<b>1.</b>	<b>REMUNERATION</b>			
<b>1.1</b>	Project planning and survey designing			
<b>1.2</b>	Pilot test and field data collection			
<b>1.3</b>	Data analysis			
<b>1.4</b>	Final Reports			
<b>2.</b>	<b>OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES</b>			
<b>2.1</b>	Travel Cost for Field trips (if any)			
<b>2.2</b>	Per diem allowances (Food and Lodge)			
<b>2.5</b>	Others (Please specify)			
<b>3.</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE COST/ OVERHEAD/ TAX</b>			

**O. Award criteria**

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.

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.:

30 \* Price of lowest priced proposal

Score for price proposal X = -----

## Price of proposal X

All prices/rates quoted must be exclusive of all taxes as UNICEF is a tax-exempt organization.

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.

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. References**

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