

Request for Proposals

‘Afghan Women’s Leadership Initiative to Support of Adolescent Girls’

I. Rationale

Afghanistan is one of the world’s youngest and fastest growing populations. Of the nearly 27 million people in Afghanistan¹, 13 million are children between 0-14 years and another 5.1 million are between 15-24 years old. From a low base of 1 million in 2001, when the Taliban fell, the number of children enrolled in school has gone up to 8.6 million (only 39 per cent of them are girls); however, 3.5 million school-age children are still out of school, 75 per cent of whom are girls. Despite good enrolment in early grades, the participation of girls declines at each successive grade, falling to just 28 per cent by grade 12.

Surveys in 2010-11 found that 46% of women aged 15 to 49 years were first married or in union by 18 and that 15% of them were married by age 15. Girls married young tend to experience several rights violations: they are less likely to be able to give informed consent, they are less likely to go to school, may not enjoy access to reproductive and sexual health care and face restrictions of movement and association. Marriage for young girls is tantamount to bonded labour or enslavement, subjecting them to repeated sexual abuse and economic exploitation.

UNICEF in Afghanistan is currently implementing the program of cooperation for 2015- 2019 which has a strong gender component focusing on the rights, well-being and empowerment of adolescent girls, especially on Girls Education. The country program’s outcomes and results for Health, Nutrition, WASH, Education, Child Protection and Social Inclusion are aimed at addressing inequities among children, adolescents and women, with inequities based on gender being a critical element. The country program focuses on the most deprived provinces and aims to accelerate access of children, adolescents and women to basic social services and support national efforts to scale.

The details of the program are available in the Country Programme Document approved by the UNICEF Executive Board and the Country Programme Action Plan and its associated matrices signed between UNICEF and the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Within each of the sectoral programs, UNICEF aims to reach adolescent girls for specific results, e.g., promoting maternal and newborn health in Health; for combating anaemia among adolescent girls in Nutrition; for completion of primary education, especially among out-of school adolescents, and graduation to secondary education in Education, with a specific focus on girls’ education; and for preventing and ending early marriage and combating gender-based violence in Child Protection.

The government of Afghanistan has finalized ‘The National Education Strategic Plan III (NESP III 2017-2021)’, with a focus on Girls Education, The Afghanistan National Youth Policy in 2013 and has developed a strategy to implement the policy. The National Child and Adolescent Health strategy contributes to health and nutrition goals for adolescents. UNICEF is also implementing a multi-country project to reduce vulnerability of adolescent girls and boys to increase their autonomy over decisions impacting their lives with support from the IKEA foundation in Badghis and Bamyan.

UNICEF’s 2018-2021 Gender Action Plan identifies main priority areas to support girls and boys:

1. **Adolescent Girls’ Well-being and Empowerment:** Promoting Girls’ Nutrition & Pregnancy Care, Preventing HIV/HPV, Girls’ Secondary Education, addressing Child Marriage, GBV in Emergencies and MHM
2. **Gender Equitable life outcomes and specialization for girls and boys 0-18:** Gender Equitable Healthcare, Gender Equality in Access, Retention and Learning in Education for Girls and Boys, Gender

¹ Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2013-14

Responsive Prevention and Mitigation of GBV against Girls and Boys, Non-Gender Discriminatory roles, Expectations & Practices for Girls and Boys

3. ***Gender Responsive Communities & Systems for Women and Children:*** Quality Maternal care, Gender equality in professionalization of community health workforce, Gender equality in professionalization of teachers and education workforce, Engagement of Women and Men in positive parenting, Responsiveness of WASH systems to women & girls, Affordable Quality Childcare, Cash in Women's Hands

The priority areas for this project are inherently interconnected, and a gender focus ought to create synergies and efficiencies that simultaneously improve more than one outcome, especially around behaviour change around harmful traditional practices such as Child Marriage. For example, girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to marry as children, making education one of the best strategies for protecting girls and ending child marriage. Due to the difference in age and maturity with their typically adult partners, child brides are less able to negotiate sexual relationships than older women. They are, therefore, at greater risk of unwanted and frequent pregnancies and acquiring sexually transmitted infections. Pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death for adolescent girls aged 15-19; therefore, addressing gender issues in adolescent health is critical. Adolescent girls and women with some secondary education have greater understanding of health risks.

This project will work towards enabling adolescent girls to fully enjoy their childhood and adolescence free from the risk of marriage and to experience healthier, safer, and more empowered life transitions in control of their destiny. The focus of our interventions is to prevent child marriage and to support the needs of married adolescent girls. It will deploy strategies to address child marriage, drawing from the most recent evidence base and from the prioritized approaches in UNICEF's Global Programme on Child Marriage. In line with UNICEF's programming approach for achieving gender based results, the proposed initiative will attempt to establish sustainable systems that can continue to support and serve girls and boys at scale over the long term.

II. Programme approach

In specific terms, the project will:

1. Advance Engagement with communities and families to increase awareness and understanding of the costs and consequences of early marriage and the benefits of alternative options for girls;
2. Enhance and Expand services, especially education and systems that invest in adolescent girls in terms of life skills and social protection; and
3. Support a robust Evaluation of the key interventions covering access to education, protection services and community mobilization. The evaluation will help establish baselines and guidance for the interventions areas and to also build capacity on gender relevant gender data and its utilization in Afghanistan. The evaluation be conducted by a separate partnership, but will work in close cooperation with implementing partners, key government ministries and UNICEF offices in the field and outpost.

III. Geographic focus, project coverage and targets

The five provinces have been selected based on high rates of child marriage². The 20 districts which have been identified in these five provinces are based on the presence of existing structures that can be utilized for delivery of this programme. While all provinces in Afghanistan have difficult to reach areas, all the identified areas are reachable, but will need to be assessed for security in certain areas, prior to direct implementation. The CSO/s are required to have presence in the identified provinces and districts. For this purpose, UNICEF encourages the formation of a national consortium for this project to ensure geographical coverage of the districts mentioned below.

² ALCS 2015-16

Province	District
Nangarhar	Jalalabad, Surkh rud, Kama, Darah-i-noor
Samangan	Feroz Nakhcheer, Roi-do-ab, Dara-i-soof-i-payan, Dara-i-soof-i-bala
Ghor	Chighcheran, Dwalatyar, Lal was sarjangal, Tulak
Herat	Herat, Enjil, Karrukh, Zendajan
Farah	Farah, Qala-e-Kah, Shib koh, Anar Dara

Direct beneficiaries (adolescents): 200,000 adolescent girls. Adolescent girls from 20 out of the 66 districts in five provinces will have opportunities to participate in training and orientation sessions and will organize themselves into youth and adolescents' associations/clubs for various activities under the project.

Indirect beneficiaries (adolescents): 875,000 adolescents in the remaining 46 districts of the five provinces and 200,000 adolescent boys in the 20 'project districts' of the five provinces will benefit from information shared through public fora, media including TV, radio, mobile technology, social media, traditional methods of information sharing, including television spots, street theatre, youth and student forums etc.

Direct beneficiaries (others): 200 members of community level shura from the 20 districts 80 to 100,000 elders, parents, community leaders and religious leaders from the 5 provinces.

Indirect beneficiaries (others): The total population of about 1.3 million including adults in the five provinces will benefit from awareness building through local media, TV and other methods.

IV. Scope of the partnership

Partners are encouraged to submit a proposal as a consortium to include organizations with different expertise and geographic coverage. Please indicate the lead agency to manage the consortium along with submission of copies of Memorandum of Understanding with other organizations in the consortium. The duration of the proposed partnership is from March 2018 to March 2020. Performance will be reviewed at the end of each year for renewal of partnership contract.

- Potential partner/s need to have experience in managing and delivering interventions that lead to behaviour change at community level, life skills for adolescents, community based education, community mobilization, delivering cash grants, organizing Open Jirgas and working with structures such as School Management Shuras (SMS), Child Protection Action Network (CPAN), Community Development Committees (CDC) etc.
- Experience in managing programmes based on Randomised Control Trials requirements and the use of Cash Transfers
- The consortium should have geographical presence in the implementation districts.
- The lead agency of the consortium should have experience in managing similar projects worth \$5 million, with a particular expertise in creating behaviour change around harmful traditional practices
- The consortium should have a team leader with minimum 10 years of experience, an M&E specialist, provincial focal points for each of the four provinces and community officers in the districts.

Behaviour Change through Community Level Engagement: This will be a key strategy to achieve the result of empowerment of adolescents, especially girls' empowerment. This will involve engagement and mobilization of key stakeholders such as religious and other influential leaders (for example Maliks), parents and the community at large. Community discussions will be held to raise awareness on harmful traditional practices and develop action plans to prevent and address them at community level including plans to ensure that all school-age

children are in formal schools/ accelerated learning centres, there are no marriages before age 18, adolescents are supported to access services for their protection and empowerment.

Building on existing structures: The programme implementation will be done through existing mechanisms such as Accelerated Learnings Centres (ALCs), School Management Shuras (SMSs), Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) which is a forum mandated by the Ministry of Labour Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD) to respond to reported cases of child abuse, Community Development Committees (CDCs) etc. as much as possible. The partner CSO/s will map the existing structures in the programme implementation areas and identify the most appropriate channels for delivery of programme interventions (which may vary depending on context and capacity).

Strong coordination with government agencies and other partners: Since the programme will capitalize on existing structures, regular coordination meetings at national, provincial and district levels should be held for integrated programme implementation. It is critical to liaise with Ministry of Education (MoE), Provincial Education Directorates (PEDs) and District Education Departments (DEDs) along with government agencies related to child protection, health and nutrition in this process. UNICEF is exploring the formation of a steering committee at national level to coordinate and oversee work related to adolescent development, focusing on Girls' Education.

V. Key Objectives and Activities

1) Change perceptions on the acceptability of Child Marriage and mobilize communities to delay marriage by raising awareness of adolescent girls' rights, the laws in place to protect them, the negative consequences of Child Marriage, and the importance of educating girls.

By end of 2020, engage with families and communities, including influential individuals such as elders and religious leaders, in 20 districts of 5 provinces (Farah, Ghor, Herat, Nangarhar and Samanghan) to prevent early and forced marriage through:

- a) awareness raising on the importance of preventing Child Marriage, by highlighting its negative health, economic, and social consequences for girls, their families, and communities through media, workshops, and community dialogues in mosques, schools, and shuras (village councils);
- b) education and awareness raising on Customary, Islamic, Sharia and civil laws that protect the rights of children and protect them against Child Marriage; and
- c) strengthening the implementation of the laws protecting the rights of children and protecting them against Child Marriage

Activities:

a) Training of facilitators at district level	a) Training of facilitators on facilitation skills, methods and issues related to end Child Marriage
b) Workshop and focus group discussions	b) Workshops and FGDs at district level to identify specific barriers and bottlenecks and agree on key messages for Ending Child Marriage in 20 districts: 20 workshops in the start of the programme with key leaders
c) Community dialogue involving all stakeholders	c) Community Dialogue in 50 villages per district for developing Shura plans of action on ECM: 20x 50 villages in each district across 4 times a year
d) Communication and information materials	d) Communication and Information material development: leaflets, picture stories and other material for advocacy and information sharing at community level: over 3 years in 20 districts

2) Empower adolescent girls to make informed life choices through education, vocational and life skills training, and peer support networks

Empower adolescent girls in selected districts by supporting them with cash grants to attend formal schools, participate in accelerated learning programmes, or receive vocational and life skills training, as appropriate. In addition, UNICEF will support meetings and networks of adolescent girls to help them gain knowledge and skills; increase their agency, confidence, and self-esteem; and build their capacity to access services and seek support to postpone marriage. An evaluation and research organisation will be responsible for the cash grant approach, including an impact evaluation in Ghor and Herat to measure the impact of an RCT approach. This will feed into the wider evaluation approach.

The Cash Transfer Approach

Cash transfers will be distributed to target households with at least one out of school adolescent girl. UNICEF will disburse a total of USD 1,275 million through cash transfers to eligible households. Due to the absence of statistical information on demographics at village level, estimates of eligible households are not determined yet. UNICEF, however, will commission a brief census to identify the number of eligible households.

The cash component will be implemented in Ghor and Herat where 300 villages with active secondary schools for girls and Accelerated Learning Centres for out-of-school children will be randomly selected. Of the 300 eligible villages 200 will be randomly assigned to participate in social mobilization activities with half of them receiving cash grants. Overall, there will be two treatment groups:

1. 100 villages with cash grants and social mobilization activities
2. 100 villages with social mobilization activities only

The remaining 100 villages will constitute the control group. The cash grants will be distributed among the target population multiple times before and during the school enrolment on an annual basis for three consecutive years. An impact evaluation will be conducted for the cash component. (see below)

Activities:

a) Cash grants for adolescent girls out of school to progress from Accelerated learning centres (ALCs) to nearby secondary schools	a) 32,000 adolescent girls provided with cash grants
b) Safe spaces and networks for adolescent girls	b) Establish 5 safe spaces for adolescent girls and promote close mobile based networks using Rapidpro technologies for peer discussions related to issues affecting them
c) Lifeskills education for adolescent girls	c) Conduct lifeskills education sessions for adolescent girls 10 sessions per district each year
d) Community based vocational training for adolescent girls	d) Conduct vocational education sessions for adolescent girls - 2 sessions per district each year

3) Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementing partners will be required to develop a monitoring framework with appropriate data collection tools and frequency to track the programme's progress throughout the implementation process. The monitoring framework must have a matrix outlining approach to collecting data on the programme indicators. The implementing partners will be required to submit monitoring reports in the format that will meet the standards of UNICEF.

UNICEF will commission a separate evaluation to generate rigorous evidence (baseline and endline) on the performance of the interventions outlined above. This evaluation is outside the scope of this request for proposals. However, the selected implementing partners will work closely with the partners for the evaluation, over the course of the project, in particular the RCT component around cash transfers. The same partner will evaluate the outcomes of the programme, specifically measuring the impact of the different interventions via an unconditional cash grant modality in Ghor and Herat. The impact evaluation will be conducted through randomized controlled trial (RCT).

VI. Submission guidelines (including templates for submission):

- Based on this request for proposals, please indicate by 23rd February 2018 by email to Teresa Hampson thampson@unicef.org if you are interested to partner with UNICEF for this programme.
- A briefing meeting will be held at UNICEF on 5th March 2018 for organizations interested in submitting a proposal. The templates for submission (programme document, budget and work-plan) will be shared during that meeting.
- Deadline for submission of proposals is 18th March 2018
- The focal point at UNICEF is Teresa Hampson at thampson@unicef.org for any queries related to this RFP with additional information on the UNICEF partnership framework available at <https://www.unicef.org/about/partnerships/>

VII. Evaluation criteria:

SN	EVALUATION CRITERIA	POINTS
1	Technical expertise and experience in the sector/area: required knowledge, specific skills, specialists, and track record.	20
2	Local experience, presence and community relations: on-going programme in the area of operation; knowledge of the local context; engaging children; trust from local communities; existing networks; established consultation and feedback mechanisms with local communities which feeds back into the design of future programmes.	16
3	Realistic timelines and plans: to achieve the programme outputs that meet the needs of the UNICEF Afghanistan Office and time considerations critical to deliver results.	16
4	Geographical coverage and access/security considerations: geographical presence in the selected districts and ability to operate in given security conditions or location.	12
5	Management ability: ability to manage the size of the envisioned intervention (e.g. past experience managing randomized control trials, similar size budgets and staffing)	12
6	Cost effectiveness: level of direct costs and administrative costs proposed as necessary by the CSO/s to implement the joint work plan.	12
7	Contribution of resources: contribution of resources to achieve results (e.g. cash, intellectual property, human resources, supplies and/or equipment) by the partner that are presently available (or potentially mobilized by the partner) in order to supplement UNICEF resources.	6
8	Sustainability of results: exit strategy on how the results achieved through this project will be carried on beyond the partnership.	6
	TOTAL	100