TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE POTENTIAL OF DELIVERING WEEKLY IRON AND FOLIC ACID SUPPLEMENTS TO WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN HAITI

Ottawa, October 2017

NutritionIntl.org
About Nutrition International

Nutrition International (NI), a renowned International development organization with its head office in Ottawa, Canada, is committed to eradicate all forms of malnutrition by implementing interventions that transform the lives of vulnerable people especially women, adolescent girls and children through improved nutrition status.

At Nutrition international, we believe that nourishing people’s potential starts with nourishing their bodies. Nutrition International combines deep technical expertise with flexible delivery approaches to forge creative partnerships – both with the broader and local development communities and other sectors – to integrate nutrition delivery into existing platforms that have the high potential to ensure a meaningful impact.

Background and rational

Malnutrition is one of the most persistent barriers to women and girls’ empowerment. There are many factors that make women and girls more susceptible to malnutrition – starting with physiological differences in need to gender inequality, cultural practices, education, finance and access, to name a few. Overall, malnutrition limits the capacity of women and girls to grow, learn, earn and lead. To thrive, women need different nutrients in different amounts depending on the stage of her life.

In addition to the first 1,000 days, growing evidence shows that adolescence is also a critical time for nutrition interventions, and key to fostering healthy life cycles and communities. Adolescents develop at a rapid pace, surpassed only by the staggering growth rate of a newborn. Adolescents add height, muscle, and bone mass, while nearly every system and organ in their bodies are maturing, adolescent girls are also dealing with monthly blood losses. Good nutrition can fuel optimal physical and mental growth, give girls the strength to focus on study and work, and help her ward off illness and disease.

Iron deficiency Aneamia is the most threatening and widespread malnutrition form in adolescent girls and menstruating women. According to WHO, around 500 million of non-pregnant women between the ages of 15 to 49 are anaemic worldwide. In 2000, an assessment done by UNICEF in 21 countries reported that 1 out of 3 adolescent girls was anaemic. In Haiti, anaemia is widespread and present in all ages and sexes, but still highest among females. Data from a survey done in Haiti in 2012 (the Enquête de Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services, EMMUS 2012) indicates that 56% of adolescent girls 15-19 years old and 35% of adolescent boys in the same age range are

anaemic. The same survey reports that 49% of non-pregnant women of reproductive age are anemic. A small regional study done in Cap Haitien region in 2015 showed that Haitian adolescents in the age group of 12-13 years are especially affected by anemia with prevalence rates reaching 81%.

In most populations anaemia is primarily due to iron deficiency and is in fact the late stage of a relatively long process of deterioration in iron stores. WHO states that 50% of all anemia is attributable to Iron deficiency and scientific evidence suggests that functional consequences occur prior to the onset of clinical stages of iron deficiency which means that a large number of adolescent girls and women will in fact suffer from iron deficiency, (along with its impact on health, physical and cognitive stamina), even before they can be diagnosed as anaemic.

Iron deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia (IDA) in adolescence is a major public health problem in the world and in Haiti. Wherever anemia prevalence is 20% or higher, WHO recommends weekly Iron and Folic acid supplements to non-pregnant women and adolescent girls 10-19 years old. Despite the positive impact of this intervention most countries, including Haiti, have not been yet able to implement these recommendations. The main challenge countries have is an effective delivery platform. In Haiti and some other countries, Schools have been the platform of choice through which adolescent girls can be reached with WIFAS, providing supplements to out of school girls has been more challenging. However implementation of WIFAS through schools requires other supporting actions such as behavior change interventions and work to remediate other structural factors that can only be effective if they have been selected and designed based on evidence from feasibility study.

The best way to assess the potential for a new intervention is to conduct a feasibility study prior to implementation. This feasibility study will be a scoping exercise and will include some aspects of formative research in the process that helps to define and assess attributes of the community or target audiences. Nutrition and health-related behaviors have proven extremely difficult to change and are motivated by a variety of personal, cognitive, economic, social, cultural, and structural factors. Understanding such factors and the processes that can be employed to develop meaningful and effective interventions at multiple levels (e.g. individual, interpersonal, organizational, environmental) is a primary purpose of feasibility study and formative research.

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5 Higgins et al., 1996
Nutrition international is therefore looking for a local or international Consultant to conduct a feasibility study that will inform and guide the design and development of a potential Weekly iron and folic acid supplementation as a nutrition intervention delivered to adolescent girls in and out of schools as well as to non-pregnant women. The Consultant will do so by working together with the NI team to reach the objective described below.

1.0 Feasibility study to deliver WIFAS to Haitian adolescent girls and non-pregnant women

3.1. Objective of the formative research for WIFAS
The overall objective of this formative research is to suggest the appropriate platforms through which WIFAS can be effectively delivered to: 1) adolescent girls in school; 2) adolescent girls out of school and menstruating women in Haiti. Results of this research will contribute to the effectiveness of the design and implementation of a potential WIFAS intervention by examining local perceptions, attitudes, barriers and enabling factors at individual, interpersonal and institutional levels. The results will also guide the development of a possible context specific behaviour change communication strategy and plan.

3.2. Key questions for the formative research for WIFAS
This feasibility study will address following leading questions:

- What are the patterns of school enrollment and attendance for adolescent girls? (Quantitative and qualitative data)
- What are the patterns and causes of absenteeism, including any gender barriers? (WASH, menstrual hygiene management, chores, etc.)
- Are schools in Haiti the appropriate platform through which adolescent girls could be reached with WIFAS and how? Which girls will be missed? If not why?
- What could be a better approach to reach adolescent girls in and out of schools?
- What could be the appropriate platform through which menstruating women could be reached with WIFAS and how could the platform be effectively used?
- What is level of access to a health facility? Community groups (formal & informal)?
- What is the current supply situation for IFAs (for pregnant women) in the communities and how are these managed?
- What are examples of Health Programs being delivered through the school system? Are there lessons to be learned from these?
- What are the relationships and collaborations between health and education sectors as well as levels of coordination?
- What is the potential acceptability and feasibility for teachers to deliver supplements?
- What are the relationships and collaborations between health and education sectors as well as levels of coordination?

For each of the leading questions outlined above, the consultant will develop detailed questions, data collection forms, and observational lists to be approved by Nutrition International prior to their use for data collection. Those questions will help in gathering information for the research participants’ categories listed below:

- In School Girls 10-14 years of age
- In School Girls 15-19 years of age (divided in specific groups of grades in Haiti)
- Out of School Girls 10-14 years of age
- Out of School Girls 15-19 years of age (Married and unmarried)
- Non pregnant women 20-50 years of age (Married and unmarried)
- Teachers
- Health workers
- Decision makers in selected institutions (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, PROMESS, local and international organisations)

3.3. Expected deliverables and timeline

The consultant is expected to deliver on the following:

1. **Finalization of the protocol** including research methods, sampling framework, data collection tools, and consent forms. The consultant will be responsible for the completion and submission of the protocol - for approval- to the national ethical committee in Haïti (le comité national de bioéthique, CNBE) before data collection commences. The ethical approval file needs to be submitted to and approved by Nutrition International prior to its submission to CNBE.

   **Deliverables, set 1:**
   a. Protocol including research methods, sampling framework, data collection tools, and consent forms in French and in creole.
   b. Ethical approval file for submission to CNBE in French (the CNBE requires Protocols to be in French)
   c. Ethical approval of the protocol by CNBE

2. **Data collection in three departments.**

   **Deliverables, set 2:**
   a. Clean data set. Execution of data collection, data management (cleaning, transcription and conservation)

3. **Reporting.** A preliminary and final report are expected from the consultant. The preliminary report needs to be submitted to and reviewed by NI prior to finalization of the report. An outline of the report will need to be approved by NI prior to the submission of the preliminary report.
Deliverables, set 3:
   a. Outline of the report
   b. Preliminary report
   c. Final report

The consultant will work on the below schedule to deliver the protocol, its approval, its implementation, and the report of the formative research.

Table 2: Expected deliverable and suggested timeline

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<th>Main Category</th>
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<th>Oct-17</th>
<th>Nov-17</th>
<th>Dec-17</th>
<th>Jan-17</th>
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<td>Protocol</td>
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3.4. Outline for the proposal

The proposal to be submitted to the Nutrition International will include:
1) Resumes/CV of the consultant that clearly shows relevant experience. Note: individual CVs should not exceed 4 pages.
2) A research design and methodology that adequately and appropriately responds to the objectives and proposed questions. The methodology should not exceed 4 pages.
3) Timeline for the process evaluation which includes specific deadlines for submission of deliverables
   a. Recruitment of participants
   b. Data collection
   c. Data analysis
   d. Preliminary report
   e. Final report
4) Detailed budget and financial costs
   a. Daily rates
   b. Travel (accommodation, per diems) and fees for local transport in case the consultant decides to keep this under his/her responsibility. International flight tickets are provided by Nutritional International to the Consultant. Budget to be submitted doesn’t have to include airfare.
   c. Office costs (printing, photocopying, transcription fees) in case the consultant decides to keep this under his/her responsibility
2.0 Profile of the Consultant

The best candidate to conduct this formative research should have:

- At least 5 years of experience in conducting qualitative research in the field of nutrition and public health.
- At least three years of experience in collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Preferably, the consultant should have access to qualitative data analysis software like NVivo or Atlas, and experience in using the software.
- Experience in collecting and analysing quantitative data and have access to quantitative data analysis software and experience in using the software.
- Language skills: speaking and writing both French and English is required.
- Speaking and writing Haitian Creole is a must.
- Completed a course on ethics in research or commit on taking a course on protecting human participants in research before the data collection.

3.0 How to apply

Interested candidates are invited to send résumé and their proposal to jnihorimbere@nutritionintl.org quoting “Feasibility study in Haiti” in the subject line. Competition closes on October 30th, 2017.