



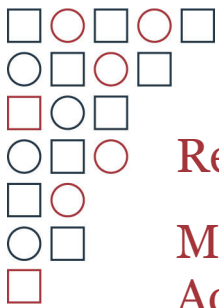
Request for Proposal No: 28-08-2023

Mid-term review of Lao PDR National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2021-25

August 28th, 2023

**Deadline for receipt of proposals:
22nd September, 2023 at 11.59pm Ottawa EST**





Request for Proposal for a Consultancy

Mid-Term Review of Lao PDR National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2021-25

1. INTRODUCTION

Nutrition international is a global organization dedicated to delivering proven nutrition interventions to those who need them most. For 30 years, NI has worked as an ally to governments and a wide range of stakeholders to implement nutrition interventions and solutions to malnutrition – including micronutrient deficiencies – through different programs. Working in partnership with country governments, donors and implementers, NI conducts cutting-edge nutrition research, supports critical nutrition policy development, and integrates nutrition into broader development programs, providing strategic technical assistance and knowledge dissemination to support the scale-up of nutrition globally.

Nutrition International provides quality, timely and coordinated expert technical assistance in the areas of nutrition governance, financing and data to governments, multilateral organizations, development banks and other partners. Our technical assistance aims to advance the effective scale-up of evidence-based nutrition interventions and programs, with a focus on elevating the health of populations in areas with the highest potential for impact.

Nutrition International is collaborating with the government of Lao PDR to support its national nutrition agenda by providing technical assistance to the Nutrition Center of Laos to conduct a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) 2021-25.

NI is now seeking to hire a consultant or firm to undertake this assignment.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Despite reduction in poverty rates, Laos has been grappling with economic uncertainty and social service challenges, which have become more evident in the wake of the Covid -19 pandemic. These vulnerabilities continue to impact malnutrition and other important human development indicators.

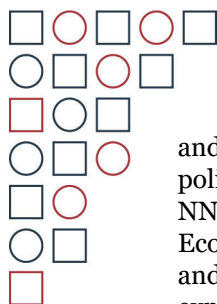
Though the prevalence rate of stunting among children under five declined from 44% in 2011 to 33% in 2017, and wasting from 10.9% to 9.2%¹, malnutrition rates in Laos remain among the highest in Southeast Asia, ranking a close second to Cambodia. Anemia also affects nearly half of all women and children in both countries². Chronic under-nutrition is prevalent among poor and ethnic minorities in rural, upland areas, where food insecurity is significant and access to healthcare and education is limited. The vulnerability to economic shocks brought on by the pandemic suggests an increase in cases of malnutrition, in particular lower dietary diversity among mothers and their children, as well as fewer mothers breastfeeding until the child's first year. Notably, the first round of nutrition surveillance in 2023 reported increases in the prevalence of stunting and underweight compared to 2022 and a reduction in exclusive breastfeeding rates until six months or breastfeeding until two years³.

The National Nutrition Strategy 2016-25 (NNS) and its third National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2021-25 (NPAN) are the current policies aimed at improving access to nutritious food

¹ MOH, EU, UNICEF, "An evidence-based policy brief: Reducing stunting among children under 5 years of age in Lao PDR," Centre for Development Policy Research, MPI, NIPN (2021)

² ² Anemia prevalence rates in women of reproductive age and children under 5: Laos - 39.4%, 43.5% (Lao PDR DHIS II); Cambodia – 35%, 44% (Cambodian Demographic Health Survey)

³ National Information Platform for Nutrition, Nutrition Center, MPI, "Nutrition Surveillance 2023 Round 1 [900 children sampled in 36 villages and district sentinel sites in 18 provinces]," NIPN



and reducing malnutrition in Lao PDR through a convergent, multi-sectoral approach. These policies focus on maternal and young child nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life. The NNS-NPAN, through sector development plans, also contribute to the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2021-25, which aims to build quality human resources and a labor force that assures improved nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation, life expectancy, alongside reduced maternal and under-five mortality. Among the goals of the NSED is to advance Lao PDR into upper-middle income status by 2026 and, by 2030, develop its human assets according to Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, 4, and 6⁴. As per the NPAN, the three priority sectors for responding to undernutrition are health, agriculture, and education.

The 2021-2025 National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) constitutes the third NPAN policy cycle since inception in 2010 and has now been implemented for more than 2 years. During this period, several gaps in the design and implementation of the NPAN have been highlighted by several stakeholders, including government officials and development partners. These are likely in the domains of inter-sectoral coordination, intra-sectoral planning, financing at subnational level, harmonization of external assistance, and monitoring.

The Department of Health and Hygiene Promotion (DHHP), MoH has thus expressed a need for an independent mid-term review of the NPAN's delivery and results, at the halfway mark of its implementation. Given the rapidly evolving national nutrition landscape, the mid-term review at this juncture provides an opportunity to assess the progress achieved in NPAN implementation so far, and to draw lessons that can inform refinements of the implementation approach for the rest of the plan's duration. Additionally, its timing coincides with the Ministry of Planning and Investment's midterm review of the NSED 2021-25 which it is linked to.

In the quarterly meeting of the National Nutrition Committee, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, held in July 2023, Nutrition International was requested to provide Technical Assistance to the Nutrition Centre of Laos, for conducting the Mid-term Review of the NPAN 2021-25. Nutrition International is now seeking to hire a consultant or firm to undertake this assignment.

3. GOAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the mid-term assessment will be **to review the progress of NPAN 2021-25, based on its agreed principles, objectives and indicators, against the expected outcomes (interventions / results) and outputs (main activities) halfway through its implementation period.**

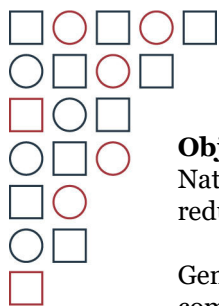
The specific objectives of the mid-term review include:

Objective 1: Assess the progress against outcome indicators (Intervention indicators) specified in the NPAN 2021-25, and the contribution of outputs (Activities of Interventions) towards achieving the planned outcomes; given limited data, assess project funding of Interventions and Activities, geographical locations, and target populations.

Objective 2: Assess the achievements of NPAN 2021-25 concerning relevance, coherence, and effectiveness in line with OECD-DAC definitions; compare with global guidance and regional practice on reducing undernutrition; and correlate the criteria with the thematic areas identified in the scope of work.

Objective 3: Provide actionable recommendations based on early successes and challenges identified in 2021-23, in view of the NPAN overall goal by 2025.

⁴ SDG 2 – Zero hunger, 3 – Good health and well-being, 4 – Quality education, 6 – Clean water and sanitation



Objective 4: Facilitate the process of assessing the sustainability of NPAN together with the National Nutrition Committee Secretariat based on changes in context and approaches to reducing malnutrition in the country.

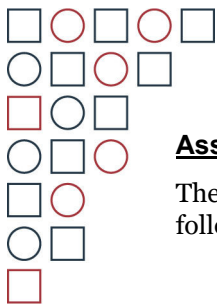
Gender equality should be addressed in all parts the Objectives. This will build on the commitments to addressing gender equality⁵ and other inclusion issues in malnutrition that already exist in the NPAN and will also assess how this approach can be strengthened.

4. SCOPE OF WORK

Based on the initial assessments conducted, the inquiry of this evaluation will also focus on measuring change in the following thematic areas:

- **NPAN Conceptual and Strategic Framework ('convergence'):** Based on the design of the NPAN, analyze how the multi-sectoral outcomes (8 Interventions) are being implemented and achieved vis-à-vis the sector outcomes (health - 7 Interventions, education - 7 Interventions, agriculture - 4 Interventions). How do Secretariats manage this setup, including budget allocation for activities? Reflect on the appropriateness of this conceptual and strategic design in contributing to achieving objectives (goal, outcomes) considering the convergent aspects of managing and implementing the NPAN. Is there a better or more effective approach to coordinating the different sectoral inputs into nutrition?
- **NPAN Strategic Framework and sector integration:** An analysis of the understanding of nutrition within the health, education, and agriculture sectors and to which degree nutrition is integrated within current sector plans (2021-25). Identify other priority sectors for reducing undernutrition in the current context of Lao PDR. Assess the functional relationship between sectors and how joint implementation can be improved, for instance, health and education co-implementation of WASH, deworming, and supplementation activities.
- **Progress and achievements by development programs and projects:** Understand the lessons that NPAN can learn from development partners, such as converging nutrition actions in communities that could be the basis for the operationalization of NNS-NPAN at local levels. Review the successes (and challenges) in terms of: (i) sub-national governance (i.e., multi-sectoral coordination, sector leadership, provincial/district leadership, enabling environment); and (ii) technical approaches (i.e., SBCC for nutrition, community incentives, sector leadership/motivation, gender inclusion, social protection/cash transfers). Identify improvements in capacities and their use in cross-learning between districts and provinces.
- **Policy financing:** Sector budgets are required to implement nutrition activities. Do sector budget plans adequately finance the NPAN multi-sectoral plan? How can the NNS-NPAN leverage available official development assistance and project funding to sustain nutrition priorities and complement national sector budget allocations?
- **Partnerships and complementarity:** Understand the influence and potential of the SUNCSA and other sector networks (e.g., informal/formal working groups on land use, rural development, etc) on strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration for nutrition, and on understanding and deepening nutrition integration into sector priorities at the practical (implementation) level.
- **Recommendations:** Prioritise the suggestions according to what can be considered realistically during the remaining NPAN 2021-25 implementation and what can contribute to sustainability after 2025.

⁵ NPAN 2021-25: Strategic Objective 13 – Promote gender equity; Intervention 22 – Develop and implement multisectoral plans for promoting gender equity within nutrition interventions in all sectors at all levels (page 32, 39, 78)



Assessment questions

The main review questions to be addressed in the MTR include, but are not limited to the following:

1. What is the extent to which the strategies mentioned in the NPAN 2021-25, to address malnutrition among women of reproductive age and children under 5, have been scaled up?
2. How did the sectoral outcomes of the NPAN contribute to the effectiveness of a convergent approach to change behaviors and promote improved nutrition in different populations?
3. What is the current outlook for the sustainability of each sector's interventions and the multi-sectoral interventions? What is needed for the long-term sustainability of the country's efforts to address malnutrition through multi-sectoral approaches?
4. To what extent is the NPAN conceptual and strategic framework adequate and appropriate in achieving objectives, using the convergent approach to coordinate sectoral inputs?
5. What functional relationships exist between sectors that can help improve joint implementation? What other sectors can be prioritized to support nutrition?
6. What are the approaches taken to implement the NPAN at the national and subnational level from 2021-23? What were the critical successes and challenges in the process?
7. How can sectors and the multi-sector governance mechanism leverage programs and projects as complementary external funding?
8. What corrective and reinforcing actions are required to support improved implementation by all stakeholders until 2025 to achieve NPAN objectives?

5. METHODOLOGY

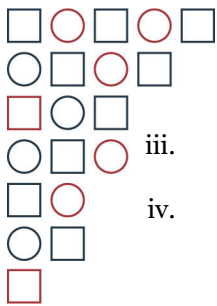
The methodology for the review has been developed with the Secretariat of the NNC and the lead of the Technical Committee at the MOH Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion, the Nutrition Center, and the sector Nutrition Focal Points at the central level and in consultation with development partners.

The **qualitative inquiry** is expected to build on a recent NNS-NPAN governance, capacities, and financing analysis. Methods of investigation may include:

- Literature review
- Key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD), observations.
- Field visit to some provinces (maximum 2) to verify multi-sectoral governance practices that can be modelled and to assess sustainability.
- Workshops to present emerging findings and recommendations to NNC-S and other stakeholders for review, discussion, and feedback.

6. DELIVERABLES

- i. Inception Report (Draft and final)- setting out the overall approach and assessment methodology, updated workplan, and outline for the MTR. The Consultant will be expected to conduct consultation meetings with various stakeholders to obtain inputs and finalize the report.
- ii. Preliminary findings report and PPT presentation – this will be presented to the Secretariat of the National Nutrition Committee and key stakeholders for comments.



iii. Draft Mid-term review Report

iv. Final Mid-term review report

7. TIMELINE

A Consultant or small Consultancy team will undertake the review assignment between November 20, 2023 and February 29, 2024.

8. MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING/COORDINATION MECHANISM

- The Consultant will report to the Nutrition International Team comprising of the Technical Lead and the Regional Manager Asia, with oversight provided by the Deputy Director TA Management and Delivery.
- The Consultant will work under the direct supervision of the Director General of the Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion, Ministry of Health, and work in close collaboration with the Nutrition Center Director and assigned technical staff.
- Nutrition International will provide the funding for the consultancy assignment, and payments will be subject to performance and reaching deliverables as agreed upon at the time of contract signing.

9. STATION / LOCATION

The consultant/team will be based in Vientiane to undertake the work. (S)He/They can work from home but will be required to visit the Nutrition Centre and other stakeholder locations as needed. There may be some travel required to the provinces.

All travel required under this consultancy will be provided for by Nutrition International. Travel allowances maximums are based on standard rates of the organization.

10. REQUIRED PROFILE

The Consultant should have the following profile:

Education:

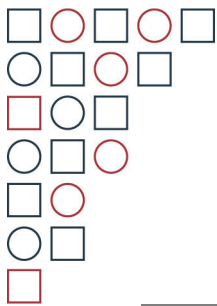
- Post-graduate qualification in Nutrition/ Public Health/ Global Health, Agricultural Science/ Development Studies.

Language Skills:

- Fluency in written and spoken English is mandatory.
- Preference will be given to the ability to speak in Lao

Experience:

- Comprehensive understanding of the nutrition relevant policies, strategies, plans, and programs as well as public health, nutrition, food system, national and sub-national level planning, and governance systems of Laos
- Experience in reviewing/evaluating multisector approach development processes. Participation in MTR of health and nutrition sector plans or similar review processes will be an added advantage.
- Understanding of evaluation tools, designs, and methods
- Demonstrated understanding of gender equality analysis and its application in nutrition planning



- Strong documentation and presentation skills.
- Excellent computer skills in Microsoft Office applications (MS Word, PowerPoint)

11. RFP Timetable

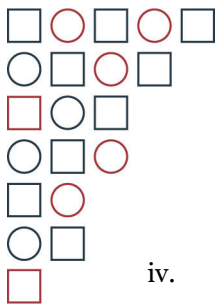
Activity	Date Required
RFP available for distribution	28th August, 2023
Deadline for Receipt of Questions	8th September, 2023
Closing Date and Time for Proposals – Mandatory	22nd September 2023, 11.59pm Ottawa Eastern Standard Time
Evaluation and Selection Process Completion	17th October, 2023
Projected Contract Award Date	15th November, 2023

12. SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

- Full proposals need to be submitted via email to the following address with all attachments in docx or PDF to rmorgan@Nutritionintl.org with copy to takintunde@NutritionIntl.org by the deadline of September 22, 2023.
- Please use subject line “Mid-Term Review of Lao PDR National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2021-25”.
- For the purpose of requesting any clarification or information, please send an email to rmorgan@nutritionintl.org with the subject line :“Clarification needed – Mid-Term Review of Lao PDR National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2021-25 ”

The application **MUST** include:

- Cover Letter:** Proposals must be accompanied by a cover letter (not exceeding 1 page) with the respondent’s address and convey the Consultant’s ability and suitability to carry out the work. The letter must be signed by a suitable authority able to commit the agency to a binding contract. It must quote the RFP number and title.
- Signed Declaration** provided in Annex A of this document.
- Detailed Technical Proposal:** This should not exceed 10 pages and should include the following:
 - Project description, demonstrating a high-level understanding of the scope and purpose of the project.
 - Competencies and experience that the Consultancy would bring to the objectives.
 - Approach, with a clear narrative of the activities to be conducted to achieve each objective and a clear description of the proposed methods to be used.
 - Proposed deliverable(s) for each activity.



- Workplan with a timeline. The workplan should include the proposed timelines for each of the activities, milestones, and deliverables. Preferably a Gantt chart showing deliverables and timeframes.
- iv. **Profile:** Full Resume(s) or Curriculum Vitae (CV) of key team members must be submitted together with the Technical Proposal. Citations, examples and/or accessible electronic links to examples of relevant recent written work by key personnel should also be submitted as part of the resume/CVs
- v. **Financial proposal:** The Consultant shall submit a financial proposal detailing:
- Breakdown of expected activities and deliverables.
 - Proposed cost disaggregated by the number of days.
 - Dates when progress reports and invoices will be submitted.
 - Proposed fees should be inclusive of all tax, and standard business overheads.

13. BUDGET

This will be a deliverables-based contract, with up to 4 payment milestones spread out over the course of the assignment. The consultants may propose a schedule for deliverables and payments. The maximum total cost for this assignment is CAD \$45,000 or its equivalent in the local currency.

14. RECEIPT, EVALUATION AND HANDLING OF PROPOSAL

Once a proposal is received before the due date and time, NI will:

- Log the receipt of the proposals and record the business information.
- Review all proposals and disqualify any non-responsive ones (that fail to meet the terms set out in these instructions) and retain the business details on file with a note indicating disqualification.
- Evaluate all responsive proposals objectively in line with the criteria specified below (Table 1) and inform respondents of the evaluation decision being made on a timely basis.

NI reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any and all proposals, and/or to annul the RFP process, prior to award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Respondents or any obligation to inform the affected respondents of the grounds for NI's actions prior to contract award.
- Negotiate - with Respondent(s) invited to negotiate - the proposed technical approach and methodology, and the proposed price based on the Respondent's proposals.
- Amend this RFP at any time.

Submitted proposals will be shortlisted and the successful proposal will be identified based on the below selection criteria (See Table 1). The selected Respondent will be contacted and will be expected to enter into a Contract with NI for the duration of the consultancy. The terms and conditions of this current RFP will normally form part of the Contract.

The objective of the Evaluation and Selection Process is to identify the Proposal that effectively meets the requirements of this RFP and provides the best value to NI. A Proposal may be deemed non-compliant if it is not submitted in the requested format or if requested information is not submitted. All determinations are made at the sole discretion of NI.

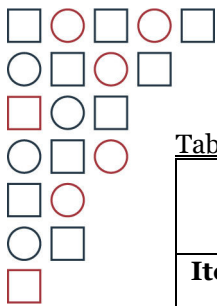


Table 1: Scoring Criteria for Proposals

Consultancy for the Mid-term Review of NPAN 2021-25, Lao PDR		
Item	Assessment Category	Weight
Profile	The required qualifications and key competencies (education and work experience) to carry out the assignment are met by consultant (as per the presented resume(s))	30%
Technical Proposal	The Technical proposal provides a high-level understanding of the project scope. The proposal clearly indicates: 1) the proposed objectives of the work, 2) the activities to be conducted to achieve each objective, 3) the deliverable(s) for each activity. Including workplan with a timeline with specific deadlines proposed for each of the activities, milestones, and deliverables.	50%
Financial proposal	The financial proposal captures all critical components, any expenses, and justification summaries	20%
TOTAL		100

The Evaluation Stages

Stage 1: Review of Mandatory Requirements

Stage 2: Review of Technical Proposal

Stage 3: Review of Financial Proposal

Stage 4: Shortlisting based on scoring of Technical and Financial Proposals

Stage 5: Interview of shortlisted candidates and final selection

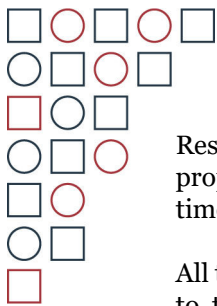
Review of Mandatory Requirements: each proposal first will be evaluated for completeness of the submission. Failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions contained in the RFP including, but not limited to, failure to provide all the required information or documentation, may result in disqualification.

Once confirmed that the Respondent has met the mandatory submission requirements of the RFP, Technical Proposals will be evaluated by NI based on their compliance with the requirements set out in this RFP.

Financial Proposals will be evaluated based on their compliance with the requirements as set out in this RFP.

Evaluation considerations may include but are not limited to:

- competitiveness of pricing.
- compatibility of delivery schedule with needs.
- prior performance (for previously contracted Respondents);
- risk assessment and identification; and
- managerial ability to complete the tasks set out in the RFP.



Respondents may be requested to correct errors or inconsistencies identified by NI during the proposal evaluation process. Respondents that do not comply with such requests within the timeframe communicated will be disqualified.

All the terms and conditions of this RFP and its annexure, including the Respondent's response to this RFP, will form a part of the award unless otherwise negotiated. The Respondent understands that if it proposes an amendment or additional terms to the award, these must be clearly detailed in the proposal and may affect the evaluation of the proposal.



ANNEX A – DECLARATION FORM

“We have examined the information provided in your Request for Proposals (RFP) and offer to undertake the work described in accordance with requirements as set out in the RFP. This proposal is valid for acceptance for 6 months and we confirm that this proposal will remain binding upon us and may be accepted by you at any time before this expiry date.”

“We accept that any contract that may result will comprise the contract documents issued with the RFP and be based upon the documents submitted as part of our proposal.

“Our proposal (Technical and Financial) has been arrived at independently and without consultation, communication, agreement or understanding (for the purpose of restricting competition) with any other Respondent to or recipient of this RFP from Nutrition International.

“All statements and responses to this RFP are true and accurate.”

“We understand the obligations regarding Disclosure as described in the RFP Guidelines and have included any necessary declarations.”

“We confirm that all personnel named in the proposal will be available to undertake the services.”

“We agree to bear all costs incurred by us in connection with the preparation and submission of this proposal and to bear any further pre-contract costs.

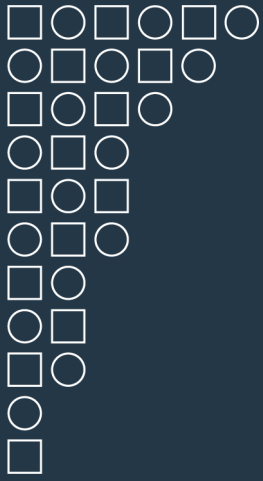
“I confirm that I have the authority of [insert name of organization] to submit this proposal and to clarify any details on its behalf.”

Name:

Title:

Date:

Signature:



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