

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ACCESS BARRIERS TO QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SOMALIA

I. INTRODUCTION

Save the Children International (SCI) is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in children's lives worldwide. SCI has been operational in Somalia since 1951. Guided by the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2019-2021, SCI strives to ensure most deprived children aged 0-5 years have a strong start in life; children aged 6–14 years have a better foundation for a bright future; young people aged 15-24 years become socially and economically productive citizens; girls and women have greater voice, choice and control over decisions affecting their lives, and strengthened government and civil society capacity to sustain child wellbeing in Somalia. SC Somalia implements a range of child-focused and thematically integrated programs across Somaliland, Puntland and Southern States through sustainable humanitarian and development programming which enhances both government and community improve livelihood.

Early childhood education intervention is in line with SC Somalia Country Office Strategic Plan 2019-2021, as it contributes to the realization of Goal one of the strategies which is, "To ensure Most Deprived Children (0-5years) have a Strong Start in Life". Strong start in life means having access to quality early learning opportunities among others.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Somalia has been in protracted conflict, humanitarian crisis and insecurity for decades. The conflict has had pervasive impact on all systems across the country. Education notwithstanding. Access to basic quality education for Somali children has been limited over the last 3 decades with only 260,269 (142,950 boys, 117,319 girls) children attending primary school in 2018/2019 academic year (which is 30% Gross enrolment rate)¹. The low enrolment in primary school is partly attributed to the high drop-out rates among grade 1-3, associated with lack of pre-school opportunities. Early Childhood Education (ECE) almost non-existent in the country, over 90% of children in Somalia start schooling from grade one without attending pre-school. This results in a lack of foundational literacy and numeracy readiness skills which impacts the performance of children at primary school, and is one of the factors contributing to high dropout rates².

The science of early childhood development demonstrates the importance of children's earliest experiences for long-term development and learning. Research increasingly demonstrates that the quality and the amount of early stimulation and learning opportunities offered to children strongly influence their cognitive abilities as well as socio-emotional and physical development. Exposure to Early childhood Education has shown positive effects on school readiness and academic achievement, including performance on standardized tests, reduced school dropout and increased grade retention

¹ Annual Education Statistics Year book: 2018/2019

² Retention rates for lower primary school children (Grades 1-5) for federal member states and Banadir region is 66.7%.



and significant benefits in terms of cognitive and socio-emotional abilities which lead children to have greater capacity to problem solve and self-regulate their behaviour and emotions.

Currently, Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a global agenda to ensure children grow to their full developmental potential. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a critical sub sector of early childhood development. The Government of Somalia recognizes that ECE interventions are significant to the social and economic development of the country as these interventions provide children with a fairer and better start in life.

While there is overwhelming evidence on the importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE) to a child's short and long-term development, access to early childhood learning opportunities remains extremely limited and non-existent in Somalia. Early Childhood Education (ECE) remains an under-resourced subsector.

In Somalia, there are three main channels for early learning programs; traditional Koranic school, integrated Koranic schools and formal Early childhood Education ECE facilities i.e. kindergartens and nursery schools. Majority of pre-primary aged children are excluded from formal ECE facilities because such facilities are non-existent especially in rural nomadic communities. The few existing formal ECE facilities, run by NGOs and private foundations, are in larger urban centres and focus on child care rather than holistic child development and are not affordable for the majority of the rural and crisis affected communities. Koranic schools, which are widespread in both rural and urban areas, provide religious education for children focusing on the Koranic and Islamic teaching. Parents fund and manage the Koranic schools. Integrated Koranic schools offer a broader range of subjects. While most recent data on early childhood education in the country is not available, the country's 2018-2020 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (Ministry of Education, 2017) estimates only 2.2% of children between 3 to 5 years of age in Southern states attended early childhood learning programmes in 2012. Structured learning opportunities for the majority of the pre-primary age children is concentrated in Koranic schools; which offer religious teaching.

There is limited data to conduct a robust analysis on quality issues for ECE. It is widely assumed that the quality of ECE services varies greatly for a range of reasons including: lack of a standardised ECE curriculum, untrained teachers as there is no clear training policy or strategy for ECE teachers and caregivers, out-dated teaching/learning approaches, lack of learning materials, inadequate use of play and age-appropriate teaching and learning strategies as well as the strong focus on religious teaching in Koranic schools over other important competencies to support the holistic development of early year children.

Save the Children Somalia's response

Save the children in Somalia is implementing Ready to Learn³; an evidence-driven, play-based response to the global learning crisis in which millions of children lack access early childhood education and, as a result, lack the skills they need to succeed in school and life. This approach targets children of pre-school age (3-6 years) and has three core components: learning in the early childhood centres,

³ TITLE / DIVIDER SLIDE – INSERT TITLE HERE (sharepoint.com)

learning at home and assessments. Under this approach, the country office with financial support of SC Italy, constructed 10 ECE centres in Beletweyne district, Hiraan Region. These centres target vulnerable and crisis affected children of pre-school age (3-6 years). Additionally, plans are underway to further increase access by working closely with communities to construct ECE hubs/learning areas within 50 existing traditional Koranic schools (10 classes/hubs in each Federal Member States (FMS) and Banadir). The MOECHE and FMS MOEs working closely with the National ECE Taskforce will develop criteria to identify 50 suitable Koranic schools where the program can construct early learning model classes/hubs providing children with safe protective premises, improved learning environment and enabling families to positively improve their children's growth and development.

While the construction of these centres has increased access, there is still a large population of children not reached. As ECE is a neglected sub-sector in the education system in Somalia, there is a lot of information gap. Access is not the only barrier that children face. There is a widespread lack of understanding of the nature and importance of ECE, which results in communities assuming that attending Koranic School is the same as attending ECE. As such, there is a need to conduct this assessment to counter the information gap that exists in order to better address the core beliefs about ECE as community acceptance will be a critical factor in the success of any planned ECE intervention.

This study seeks to increase uptake of ECE by understanding the knowledge, attitude and practice of families, caregivers and religious/qur'anic leaders on preschool education, underlying social cultural, economic factors and policy environment that motivate and sustain or limit early childhood education participation as well as map the trusted communication channels of families and caregivers as influencers on their ECE-related behaviours.

3. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Research questions

The study will seek to give answer to the answer the question of *"What are the barriers to accessing quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) for vulnerable and crisis affected boys and girls?"*

Specifically, the study should answer:

- a) What are the supply side factors that hinder access to quality early childhood education for vulnerable and crisis affected boys and girls?
- b) What are the demand side factors that hinder utilization of the available quality early childhood education for vulnerable and crisis affected boys and girls?
- c) What are the factors that motivate and sustain or limit early childhood education participation for girls and boys?

Geographical scope: The research will be conducted in Baidoa, Banadir and Hiran in Southern States, Somalia.

Study Design & methodology

The study will employ an exploratory design that seeks to explore the demand and supply side barriers to accessing quality early childhood education for vulnerable boys and girls.

- The research will explore the demand side factors such as knowledge, attitude and practice of families and ECE caregiver on preschool education.
- Underlying social, cultural and economic factors that motivate or hinder early childhood education participation
- Map the trusted communication channels of families and caregivers as influencers on their ECE-related behaviors.

The proposed methodology will take into consideration the following data collection methods;

- Desk review and assessment of relevant sources will provide an in-depth analysis of ECE models, programmes and approaches in the country. These sources will include studies and reports, legislation, policies, and relevant literature. The desk review will inform the design and content of the quantitative questionnaires and qualitative guides.
- Qualitative methods will be done via focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi structured in-depth interviews with key informants (KIs), which will help to identify the barriers and bottlenecks of early childhood education services, including policy, social norms, religious and cultural practices and behaviours. The KIs will target persons with considerable knowledge on early childhood education in the country, these include Ministry of Education at different levels including DEOs, REOs among others, staff working with non-governmental actors (local and international) in the early childhood education subsector and qur'anic/religious leaders. FGDs will target caregivers supporting the children at the ECE centers and parents.
- Quantitative methods will be administered to the selected households as per the objectives and scope of the research. The methodology for household selection should be proposed by the consultant taking into consideration the target group and agreed sampling approaches.

All primary data collected during the study must facilitate disaggregation by gender, age, disability, and geographic differences.

The consultant shall adopt an appropriate sampling method that will allow correct conclusions about the study population. The sampling methodology and size will be agreed together by Save the Children and the consultant. Save the Children should in all cases review and decide whether to approve any further modifications or changes made.

Consultant should take the on-going COVID-19 pandemic situation into consideration and propose relevant measures for field work. It is anticipated that the field work will be conducted in October 2021.

4. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The study deliverables and tentative timeline (subject to the commencement date of the study) are outlined below. The lead consultant and SC working group will agree on final milestones and deadlines at the inception phase.

Deliverables and Tentative Timeline

The study should commence in October and is expected to be completed within 24 days.

Deliverables/Milestones	Level of effort
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Inception report - The study Team will facilitate a workshop with the relevant stakeholders at the commencement of the project to develop the inception report. - The inception report will be at most 20 pages (excluding annexes)	2 days
Final Data collection tools - Survey instrument - Data collection mechanism In consultation with Save the children team	3 days
Field work including training	8 days
An Interim Report / Power Point Presentation including a summary of formative findings from the study. The focus will be on: - Summary of interim findings - Any emerging program issues or risks (if applicable) - Any changes that have had to be made to the study design (if applicable) - Key tasks for the next stage of the study and any proposed refinements or changes to methodology (if applicable)	3 days
A Study Report including the following elements: - Executive summary - Background description of the Program and context relevant to the Study - Scope and focus of the study - Overview of the study methodology and data collection methods, - Findings aligned to each of the key Study questions - Specific caveats or methodological limitations of the evaluation - Conclusions outlining implications of the findings or learnings - Recommendations - Annexes (study ToR, Inception Report, Study schedule, List of people involved) A consolidated set of feedback from key stakeholders will be provided by Save The Children within 1 week of the submission of the draft report.	5 days
Final Study Report incorporating feedback from consultation on the Draft Study Report Knowledge translation materials: - PowerPoint presentation of Study findings - Evidence to Action Brief Data and analyses including all encrypted raw data, databases and analysis outputs	3 days

Administration and Logistics

Save the Children will provide all the necessary logistics needed for field visits, monitoring and verification processes. The commissioning manager for this research will be the Research Manager and the Area REALM Manager with technical support from the country office Education Technical Specialist and REALM Specialist. The consultant will also work closely with field office MEAL Coordinator and Education Program team. The consultant will be responsible for identifying potential assistants to support him/her where necessary with CO support.

Copyright and intellectual property rights

The title rights, copyrights and all other rights of whatever nature in any materials used or generated under the provisions of this consultancy will exclusively be vested with Save the Children Somalia Country office. All products developed under this consultancy belong to the Save the Children exclusively, guided by the rules of the grant contract. Under no circumstances will the consultant use the information of this study for publication or dissemination to any individual or organization without official prior written permission from Save the Children Somalia Country office.

5. STUDY TEAM AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Interested consultants will be required to submit an Expression of Interest in line with the provided template, which should demonstrate adherence to the following requirements.

Requirements and Experience

To be considered, the study team members together must have demonstrated skills, expertise and experience in:

- Conducting studies in the field of Education, particularly in relation to Early childhood education
- Leading socio-economic research, evaluations or consultancy work in Somalia that is sensitive to the local context and culture.
- Conducting ethical and inclusive studies involving children and child participatory techniques
- Conducting ethical and inclusive studies involving marginalised, deprived and/or vulnerable groups in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways
- Managing and coordinating a range of government, non-government, community groups and academic stakeholders
- Experience conducting study in humanitarian contexts
- Strong written and verbal skills in communicating technical and/ or complex findings to non-specialist audiences (especially report writing and presentation skills)
- A track record of open, collaborative working with clients

There is a high expectation that:

- Members (or a proportion) of the study team have a track record of previously working together.
- A team leader will be appointed who has the seniority and experience in leading complex study projects, and who has the ability and standing to lead a team toward a common goal.

- The team has the ability to commit to the terms of the project and have adequate and available skilled resources to dedicate to this study over the period.
- The team has a strong track record of working flexibly to accommodate changes as the project is implemented.
- Master degree and above in Education, economics, or other relevant field is required.

Financial Proposal

Save the Children seeks value for money in its work. This does not necessarily mean "lowest cost", but quality of the service and reasonableness of the proposed costs. Proposals shall include personnel allocation (role / number of days / daily rates / taxes), as well as any other applicable costs.

The consultant is expected to provide a detailed budget in US Dollars including consultancy fees. For this consultancy, the payment will be made as follows

- Upon approval of inception report and tools: 20%
- Upon submission of First Draft study Report: 30%
- Upon approval of final study report: 50%

How to apply

Interested candidates should submit an expression of interest which will includes:

A technical proposal: The technical proposal should briefly and clearly describe the following aspects; understanding of the task, technical aspect of the proposal, methodology (evaluation strategy, Sampling design, data collection tools, data processing & analysis, data quality control measures and timelines or operational plan.

Financial proposal: A signed financial proposal/ budget.

A detailed curriculum vitae (CV): detailed CV of the lead consultant with contact details (the CV should include at least two traceable references)

Applications should be sent to CSS.LOGISTICS@savethechildren.org with the subject title "Research on Access Barriers to Quality ECEs"

Dead line is 1st November 2021