



Nourish Life

Terms of Reference – Scoping Exercise for a potential Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Africa for Maternal and Newborn Health and Nutrition

Assignment	Consultancy for a Scoping Exercise for a Potential Center of Excellence (CoE) in Africa for Maternal and Newborn Health and Nutrition
Date Advertised	1st June 2026
Expression of Interest Submission Deadline	12th June 2026
Contract Type	Consultancy Contract
Program	NOURISH ; <i>Nurture the ecosystem, Optimize the market, Unlock financing, Integrate and Scale up MMS (Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation) and Calcium, For Healthy Futures</i>
Duty Station	Hybrid
Contract Duration	55 working days
Expression of Interest Submission	<p>Interested applicants should submit an Expression of Interest (maximum 5 pages) in English by email to: Olena Karelina proposals@nutritionintl.org</p> <p>Subject header: “Expression of Interest for a Scoping Exercise for a Potential Centre of Interest (CoE) in Africa for Maternal and Newborn Health and Nutrition”.</p> <p>Shortlisted applicants will subsequently be invited to submit a detailed technical and financial proposal.</p>

1. Background and Rationale

Maternal and newborn health and nutrition remain critical priorities across Africa. Despite progress in expanding access to maternal health services, many countries continue to experience high levels of maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, often linked to preventable nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy. The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) Africa in collaboration with Nutrition International is committed to supporting sustainable, locally driven solutions that strengthen maternal and newborn health and nutrition outcomes.

As part of this commitment, Nutrition International through support from CIFF seeks to support the identification of a potential Center of Excellence (CoE) in Africa that will serve as a regional hub for leadership, innovation, knowledge generation, and technical support in maternal and newborn health and nutrition. The envisioned CoE will play a central role in supporting the localisation of current and future maternal and newborn nutrition initiatives and access to the tools, toolkits, and resources developed from CIFF investments in MNH. It will enable African ownership, leadership, and voice, and drive Africa-led solutions for long-term impact and sustainability.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

To conduct a landscape analysis and establish an implementable roadmap for an Africa-based Center of Excellence that can lead and sustain localised efforts in maternal and newborn health and nutrition. This will be achieved through a desk review and virtual stakeholder consultations, followed by the development of a high-level implementation roadmap through a strategic assessment, focusing on identifying an institution that is best placed to serve as a regional center and highlighting key requirements, timelines, sequencing and cost buckets for consideration in establishment of the COE.

The consultancy will assess existing institutions, networks, and organisations across Africa to determine their potential to serve as a regional hub for technical leadership, research, advocacy, training, and knowledge dissemination in maternal and newborn health and nutrition.

3. Objectives of the Consultancy

The specific objectives of the consultancy are:

3.1 Define the scope and objectives of the Center of Excellence. This includes identification of options

Identify options for a CoE that:

3.1.1 has the capacity to house the tools, resources, and blueprints developed during the MMS and other critical investments, so they are accessible and live beyond the scope of the investment

3.1.2 has the technical capacity to support countries or partners access and operationalise these tools

3.2 Develop a ranking criterion that will inform the identification and mapping exercise for existing African institutions

3.3 Identify and map existing African institutions, networks, and local actors with the potential to serve as the CoE for maternal and newborn health and nutrition.

3.4 Assess their technical, operational, and governance, financial, and strategic capacities of the identified institutions, particularly in relation to maternal and newborn nutrition.

3.5 Identify strengths, weakness, opportunities, and potential risks for associated with the shortlisted institutions.

3.6 Evaluate the institutions' alignment with the principles of localisation, African leadership, sustainability, and the donor's Mission and impact.

3.7 Recommend one to two institutions that demonstrate the strongest potential to function as a regional CoE (and provide comprehensive and actionable recommendations on next steps to strengthen the identified institution/s to become a COE for MNHN)

3.8 Design high-level implementable roadmap for the establishment of the CoE including estimated costs and timelines

4. Scope of Work

The consultant will undertake a structured assessment process consisting of desk review, stakeholder consultations, institutional capacity analysis, and synthesis of findings. The scope of work will include, but not be limited to, the following activities.

4.1. Desk Review:

- Review existing documents such as institutional reports, strategies, and policy papers.
- Identify potential African CoE candidates, such as universities, research institutes, regional NGOs, health training institutions, regulatory bodies, or other organisations active in maternal and child health and nutrition.
- Assess each potential institution's vision, mandate, geographic reach, partnerships, and track record on localisation, sustainability, and impact in the donor's mission areas.

4.2 Virtual Stakeholder Consultations:

- Conduct online interviews or focus group discussions with regional experts, government representatives, local NGOs, academic institutions, and technical partners, philanthropies, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Understand the perceived legitimacy, capacity, and role of potential institutions in leading a CoE.
- Gather stakeholder input on key success factors, risks, and expectations from the CoE, including with the donor.

4.3 Capacity Assessment:

- Evaluate the technical, financial, and operational capacity of shortlisted institutions.
- Assess ability to house and make accessible resources developed through key donor investments and provide technical and provide technical assistance in the use and access of these resources.
- Consider the institution's history of meaningful engagement with local and national governments, communities, and international partners and their track record in achieving impact at-scale in various domains relevant to the donor's Missions.

4.4 Analysis and Recommendation:

- Analyse data collected from desk review and consultations.
- Identify strengths, gaps, and areas needing support.
- Provide a strategic assessment, recommending 1–2 institutions with the strongest potential to serve as the Africa-based CoE for maternal and newborn health and nutrition, aligned with localisation goals. This assessment will include what support is needed (organisational development, training, financial, etc.) and an implementation roadmap of how the donor should support this, highlighting key requirements, timelines, sequencing, and cost buckets.

5. Deliverables

The consultant will be expected to produce the following outputs:

- **Inception Report** outlining the methodology, work plan, and key informant list.
- **Landscape Mapping Report** summarising the findings of the desk review and stakeholder consultations.
- **Capacity assessment report** comparing the capacities, track record on impact and achievement, and localisation-readiness of shortlisted institutions.
- **Final Recommendation Report and a presentation deck.** This will include justification for the selected CoE candidate(s), type of organisation, alignment with the donor’s strategic goals, assessment of support, cost buckets, timelines, and sequencing
- **Presentation Materials** for sharing findings with the donor and other partners

6. Duration of the Consultancy

The consultancy is expected to be conducted over a period of **55 working days**.

7. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report to the **NOURISH Snr Consortium & Project Director (Maternal Nutrition Africa)** and to work closely with designated technical focal point person. Regular check-ins will be scheduled to review progress and provide feedback on deliverables.

8. Required Expertise, Experience, and Qualifications

The Consultant should demonstrate:

8.1. Proven expertise in:

- Organizational Capacity Assessment: using tools to assess governance, human resources, financial management and operational processes
- Strategic and transformational planning: develop plans to move organizations from current capacity to a CoE standard
- Participatory Methods: using workshop and stakeholder consultations to assess suitability, sustainability and buy-in
- Synthesis of complex information into clear, actionable, and strategic recommendations.

- Knowledge of CoE models: Ability to define criteria for CoE

8.2. Demonstratable Experience in:

- Localization including a deep understanding/experience of transitioning from INGO-led to locally led program or initiative and capacity building of local organization
- Conducting capacity assessments, landscape analyses, institutional assessments, and/or health systems reviews, preferably in low- and middle-income countries.
- Working with African health systems, research institutions, and regional networks, with a proven track record of delivering similar assignments.
- Experience engaging with donors, national governments, and international organizations.
- Facilitating stakeholder consultations and key informant interviews.
- Excellent report writing and presentation skills, with ability to produce high-quality deliverables.

8.3. Qualifications

- Advanced degrees (master's or PhD) in Institutional/Organizational development, Public Health, Nutrition, Global Health, Finance or related fields
- Knowledge of maternal and newborn health and nutrition will be added advantage.

The expression of interest should include:

- A brief description demonstrating understanding of the assignment
- Summary of relevant experience and qualifications of the consultant/s
- Proposed approach and methodology to achieve the project objectives.
- Examples of previous work of a similar scope and complexity.