

Terms of Reference for Consultancy to Analyze Systemic Drivers of Malnutrition and Strengthen Humanitarian-Development Complementarity in Nigeria

Purpose of Consultancy

The Nigeria INGO Forum (NIF) seeks proposals from (a) qualified consultant(s) to undertake a study to enhance humanitarian-development complementarity in the response to malnutrition in Nigeria. The study aims to:

- Identify practical pathways for improved synergy across humanitarian and development interventions.
- Conduct in-depth literature review and evidence mapping of existing data on key systemic drivers of malnutrition in northern Nigeria, looking beyond the dominantly ‘humanitarian’ framing of the crisis
- Contribute to better decision-making and coordinated HDP (or at least H-D) integrated interventions to break the cycle of protracted malnutrition

The overall purpose of this study is:

1. to investigate present humanitarian and development responses to generate actionable evidence as well as recommendations to humanitarian and development actors, government, UN agencies, donors, and policymakers; and
2. to initiate, via tangible, scalable models, a shift from separated humanitarian emergency-initiated responses to more coordinated, synergistic and complementary humanitarian and development interventions and investments.

Background

Despite substantial investments, Nigeria continues to face persistent malnutrition crises, with high rates of malnutrition, particularly amongst children under five and women of reproductive age. The public health concern is widespread, although the scale and scope vary across regions, by age, wealth and sex, as well as across the urban-rural divide. According to UNICEF, this year, 3.5 million children under five in Nigeria will suffer from life threatening severe acute malnutrition (SAM).[1] Of these children, 2.5 million children (65 per cent) reside in just six states - Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (in the north-east) and Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina (in the north-west) where there is a humanitarian response from international partners. Beyond these regional hotspots, the recently published National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Intake Survey reveal concerning trends on a national scale in diet quality and nutrient inadequacy, especially in animal-sourced protein and essential micronutrients for women and children. The consumption of biofortified crops remains low, and there is limited access to

fortifiable and fortified foods. Additionally, the prevalence of stunting among children continues to rise with emerging concerns about overweight and obesity especially in women.

There are indications that this worsening crisis is driven by complex humanitarian, socio-economic, and systemic challenges that are key factors to the worsening situation. These may include political and institutional challenges that are less well understood, meanwhile the emergency related drivers (conflict, displacement) often dominate the public narrative. Such drivers, also including limited access to health and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services—continue to perpetuate malnutrition at the household and community levels.

In addressing the malnutrition challenges in the country, there have been a wide range of emergency and development food and nutrition initiatives, including treatment and prevention specific nutrition interventions, service delivery, supplementary feeding/assistance, economic/livelihood initiatives, food systems based interventions as well as public health programs. Nonetheless, emergency-focused and system-enhancing interventions tend to remain very separate and have not reduced the scale of the crisis to date, generating the query that enhanced synergy may lead to a more effective overall response.

Key Focus Areas and Research Questions

It would be of utmost importance for the consultant to capture and triangulate views of key stakeholders concerning food security and nutrition to enrich the study. All members of the Nigeria INGO Forum, network-leads of Nutrition networks/societies, as well as key UN agencies (e.g. WFP, FAO, UNICEF), donors, federal authorities and line ministries (with a good spread of informants from states exposed to humanitarian and development action) in a selection of states based on the study parameters that are leading nutrition interventions should be consulted. The final selection of states can be agreed with the selected consultant.

Key foci of the study include, but not limited to the following guided research questions:

A. Overview:

- Who are the main actors relevant to food security and nutrition in Nigeria (mapping across HDP, I/NGO, UN, gov, Private); what are they doing and where?
- What are the macro and micro systemic drivers, insitutional barriers, plus short-term shocks that drive the recurrent and extreme nature of the crisis? These should be organised in groups of structural (e.g. institutional, macro-economic, cultural), seasonal (e.g. market dynamics) and immediate causes (incidents of displacement)¹.
- Does existing literature offer any perspectives on why the crisis has reached a peak in the last 3 – 5 years, in spite of regular investment in prevention and treatment measures?

¹ Refer to [UNICEF conceptual framework on maternal and child nutrition](#), or [The IPC Acute Malnutrition Analytical Framework](#)

- What are the current gaps and overlaps between emergency nutrition responses and long-term development programs?

B. Coordination/Integration:

- Why does no viable coordination currently exist between humanitarian and development actors on nutrition?
- How can government and partners improve coordination of information/ knowledge sharing? What information sharing mechanisms are already in place that could be replicated/ scaled?
- How can nutrition be better integrated into broader food/development systems?
- What are the current gaps and overlaps between emergency nutrition responses and long-term development programs?
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C. Strategy/Intervention:

- Are there any examples of humanitarian development integrated responses to malnutrition that can be learnt from/ expanded? Are there any examples that integrate the full HDP Nexus?
- What opportunities exist to enhance synergy, joint efforts, layering or sequencing of humanitarian and development responses?
- How do we strengthen systems to reduce the scale...of malnutrition? How can local systems (governmental or non-governmental) be strengthened to develop sustainable nutrition initiatives?
- What capacity limitations both in scale and in technical skills affect the effective implementation and delivery of nutrition services?

D. Recommendations

- The consultant should propose a set of recommendations to INGOs, UN, government and other national actors based on opportunities to scale H-D (P) integrated delivery models in response to recurrent malnutrition crises
- The consultant should aim to propose 2 -3 tangible, context specific operating models for adoption by the above actors

The consultant should offer more elaboration on these focus areas in their proposal, and the selected consultant may suggest further refinement if needed with the technical team overseeing the study.

Methodology

The consultant will adopt the most cost-effective methodologies (Desk research, KIIs, Focus Discussions, Stakeholder Mapping etc.) using both qualitative and quantitative tools, focusing on triangulating perspectives across humanitarian, development, government, private sector and

research/academia actors leading on food and nutrition nationally, drawing specific insights from selected states as agreed with the oversight team following the desk review and mapping .

Note: given the limited time of the study, consultation with network leads of key Nutrition societies would be preferred.

The consultant should ensure ethical standards in data collection, including informed consent and data confidentiality. A clear sampling strategy should be proposed if adopted.

Deliverables

1. **Inception Report:** Detailing methodology, data collection tools, and analytical framework.
2. **Desk Review:** mapping of who is doing what and where and overview root causes and drivers as outlined in the existing literature
3. **Draft Findings:** Presenting preliminary findings on systemic factors and humanitarian and development programming (HDP) complementarity.
4. **Validation Workshop:** To present and refine findings with key stakeholders/ Steering committee for the study.
5. **Final Study Report**
6. **Two online presentations** of the key findings and recommendations

Duration, Timeline, and Payment

The total expected duration to complete the assignment will be no more than 40 working days based on the following estimates.

Deliverables	No. of Weeks
1. Inception Report	1 week
2. Desk Review	1 week
3. Draft Findings	4 weeks
4. Validation Workshop	1 week
5. Final Study Report including summary	1 week
6. Two Online Presentations	1 week

The project is expected to be completed by **28th February 2026**.

Payments will be made in two instalments and based on the successful completion of deliverables:

- i. Inception Report
- ii. Submission of Final study report and completion of the **two** online presentations

Eligibility, Qualification, and Experience Required

The selected consultant(s) or firm should demonstrate:

- Proven expertise in food and nutrition systems analysis, humanitarian–development nexus, and policy advocacy.
- At least a Masters Degree in relevant subject
- Minimum 10 - 15 years' proven experience in conducting similar assignments.
- Experience in Nigeria or West Africa, with familiarity with national nutrition systems.
- Familiarity with the NW and the NE regions of Nigeria and the socio-economic and political dynamics affecting them specifically on food security and nutrition issues and programming in Nigeria.
- Strong analytical and report-writing skills with proven experience in producing high-quality research with ability to present complex information in a simple and accessible manner.
- Experience engaging with INGOs, UN Agencies, donors, and government actors.

Documents for submissions:

- A technical proposal outlining the consultant's own understanding of the required scope of work.
- Include a suggested work plan of time and activity schedule.
- A cover letter, including the commitment to availability for the duration of the assignment.
- Updated CV/s of the consultant/s that clearly spells out his/her qualifications and experience.
- Certified copy of certificate of registration/Incorporation in Nigeria or Country of Firms Origin
- Certified copy of valid tax compliance certificate.
- **Separate the technical proposal and the financial proposal responses. Provide the financial rate and related expenses.**
- Two examples of similar work completed in the past.
- Two reference contacts.

Stakeholders and Governance

- Study Steering Group comprising representatives from the Nigeria INGO Forum
- Regular check-in meetings (bi-weekly) and milestone approvals by Steering Group.
- Stakeholder consultations (workshops or interviews) during data collection phase.

^[1] <https://www.unicef.org/media/172976/file/Nigeria-Humanitarian-SitRep-30-June-2025.pdf>