

Terms of Reference for a consultancy firm to carry out an Assessment of the drivers of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortions in South Sudan through intersectional feminist poststructuralist approach

1. Area of expertise:

Assessment of drivers of unintended pregnancies and abortions.

2. Purpose of consultancy

The main purpose of this assessment will be to describe comprehensively how women, girls and the communities experience and make meaning of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion in South Sudan, how these are shaped by systemic structural forces, discourses and forms of oppression and what the societal implications are in terms of health outcomes for women and girls so as propose policy options to address such injustices.

3. Background

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) indicators are lagging in South Sudan, and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets are unlikely to be achieved. With a maternal mortality ratio of 1223 deaths per 100,000 live births, South Sudan is far from attaining the global SDG target of 70 deaths per 100,000 live births. Complications due to abortion contribute about 10% of maternal deaths. Under 2008 Penal Code Act, Safe abortion in South Sudan is only permitted if it is for saving the life of the mother.

Utilization of contraceptives is low in South Sudan with modern contraceptive prevalence rate estimated at only 4.7%. Several factors, such as age, culture, ethnicity, religion, access issues, peer pressure, and lack of partner support, could all contribute to the low utilization of contraceptives. In most traditions of South Sudan, contraception and safe abortion are seen as taboo and unacceptable, partly because of the social pressure to produce more children. Unintended pregnancies, especially among adolescents, could also be due to lack of information, mixed messaging and/or low life aspirations.

The Government of South Sudan, through the Reproductive health policy 2019-2029 and the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH & N) strategy 2019- 2024 (which is currently under review), has committed itself to improve SRHR indicators and has identified contraception and post-abortion care as key pillars to achieve this goal. It emphasizes a multi-sectoral approach in planning, calling for collaboration and partnerships with key stakeholders including community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations both national and international, UN agencies, government line ministries and communities to achieve the aspirations expressed in these documents.

Unintended pregnancies remain a significant public health issue globally and South Sudan, with various factors influencing their occurrence. Understanding the drivers of unintended pregnancies is critical for developing targeted, effective interventions. This consultancy aims to assess these drivers within the country to inform policy, programs, and services aimed at reducing unintended pregnancies.

Objective of the Consultancy

1. Describe how the construction of meaning to unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion in South Sudan may have contributed to a different understanding or framing that causes

reproductive health injustice and establish the contextual presuppositions and assumptions that underline such construction of meaning to unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

2. Assess existing policies, strategies, guidelines, programmes including services, and research related to unintended pregnancies, contraceptives and abortion and the extent to which HIV, SGBV services are integrated.
3. Build national consensus about strategies and interventions to reduce unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and fully integrate comprehensive care for women within maternal, new-born and child health.
4. Generate recommendations and policy options for improving access to, availability and quality of comprehensive care including provision of contraceptive counselling and methods; comprehensive abortion care within the context of the laws of the country and linkages to other needed sexual and reproductive health services.

4. Deliverables and duties

Activities/interventions	Time frame
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literature Review and Desk Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review existing literature, research, policies, strategies, guidelines and reports on unintended pregnancies, contraceptive use and unsafe abortion in South Sudan. ○ Identify key drivers, trends, and patterns related to unintended pregnancies, including demographic, social, and healthcare system factors. 2. Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify and engage relevant stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, civil society organizations, healthcare providers, and others. ○ Facilitate consultations and focus group discussions to understand the local context, perceptions, and barriers surrounding unintended pregnancies. ○ Produce a comprehensive situational analysis report on the desk study and the stakeholder holder engagements. 3. Primary Data Collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on the concept note attached to this consultancy and the specific objectives, develop and implement a strategy for primary data collection both qualitative and quantitative. 4. Analysis of Findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analyze data to identify the primary drivers of unintended pregnancies, including cultural, social, economic, and health system-related factors. ○ Explore the role of contraceptive use, access to family planning services, education, and gender dynamics. ○ Identify regional, ethnic, or socioeconomic variations in the drivers of unintended pregnancies. 5. Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on the findings, provide actionable recommendations for addressing the identified drivers of unintended pregnancies. ○ Suggest interventions for public health programs, policy reforms, and community- 	

based initiatives to reduce unintended pregnancies.

- Recommend strategies for improving access to family planning services and reproductive health education.

6. Finalize the assessment report and stakeholder consensus workshop and validation meeting.

- Prepare a comprehensive assessment report, summarizing the findings, analysis, and recommendations.
 - Conduct a stakeholder's consensus building workshop on the assessment analysis report.
7. Facilitate the validation meeting for the situation analysis report. Convene a strategic assessment report dissemination and launching meeting with key stakeholders and create awareness on Maputo protocol.

Expected contribution of the assessment

The findings of the assessment are expected to contribute to strengthen national policies, programmes and services as follows:

- Strengthen the delivery of contraceptives, comprehensive abortion services, including post-abortion care and referral systems;
- Reduce unintended pregnancies, the recourse to abortion and maternal mortality;
- Provide information and services that respond to women's needs; and
- Strengthen integration of SRHR services including Family planning, HIV, GBV with other sexual and reproductive health services.

5. Qualifications, experience, skills, and languages

Experience

- **Essential:** At least 3 years demonstrable experience in Proven expertise in public health, reproductive health, and gender studies. Experience in conducting assessments, research, or evaluations related to unintended pregnancies or family planning. Knowledge of the specific cultural and socioeconomic context of the country.
- **Desirable:** Ability to conduct both qualitative and quantitative analyses, knowledge in stakeholder analysis and mapping in countries similar to South Sudan. Strong analytical and report-writing skills.

Skills/Knowledge:

Ability to deliver and achieve results.

Excellent communication and writing skills.

Experience working with Ministries of Health or with international organizations.

Languages and level required (Basic/Intermediate/Expert):

English (Fluent in reading, writing, and speaking)

6. Location

Juba

On site: Juba

Off site: 40%

7. Remuneration and budget (travel costs to be included in financial proposal):

Duration of the Consultancy

The consultancy will be carried out over a period of 4 months.

Costing and Payment Terms

The financial proposal should include all costs expected to be incurred e.g data collection, analysis, and report preparation. Payment will be made in installments upon the completion of specific milestones and submission of deliverables, as follows:

- 30% upon approval of the inception report.
- 40% upon submission of the draft report.
- 30% upon submission of the final report.

