

Terms of Reference for Review of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks in Child Protection

1. Context and Rationale

There is unequivocal evidence documenting the significance of family-based care for healthy development of children, both in the immediate and long term. Further, there is documented evidence on the harm of separating children from parents, especially by placing them in residential care institutions. The United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Alternative Care Guidelines for Children highlight the role of national governments in ensuring that children remain with families and that parents are provided the necessary support and resources to take care of their children.

UBS-Optimus Foundation and GHR Foundation are both deeply involved in enhancing care reform globally. They support both international and grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing better care for children and families in the US, Asia and Sub Saharan Africa. This includes reunifying children who are separated from families and implementing community-based programs that prevent the separation of children, especially within poor and vulnerable¹ households. Implementing partners often build capacity of government staff as part of their efforts.

Forming collaborative partnerships is essential to ensuring scale and impact. Both UBS-OF and GHR Foundations are members of a Care Working Group, an initiative of Elevate Children Funders Group and engaged donors who actively fund or are interested in funding children's care² issues internationally. While we have collectively seen progress over the past decade in the attention given to children's care, there is diminishing interest among ECFG members in respect to this issue³. Some feel that the care/child protection sector is more focused on deinstitutionalization (DI), which for many is too insular, myopic and specific to the needs of an individual child. Importantly, there is limited published evidence on the outcomes of DI. For instance, there is little known regarding the effectiveness of family reintegration, foster care, and overall childcare reform, on improving the well-being of children and their families. Broader issues that have not received as much support or attention include: adolescent issues, children with disabilities, and sexual identity of children and young people, among others. There is room for stronger coordination with other issues/ sectors, such as migration, education, and health that have a direct link to children's care issues.

These sentiments are echoed in a recent report prepared by Dr. Jeremy Shiffman and Dr. Yusra Shawar (2019) for the ECFG⁴, based on reviews of literature and organizational documents and interviews with experts in the field. The report suggests that multiple factors stand behind low global priority for children's care, including the powerlessness of affected children and families, the issue's multi-sectoral nature, and competition for attention with other social welfare issues. Notably, there is divisive disagreement among children's care proponents about the acceptability of institutional care. Factors that have shaped these disagreements include a weak evidence base on the scope of the problem and solutions; divergent experiences between former Soviet bloc and other countries; cultural resistance to alternative care arrangements; commercial interests that perpetuate institutional care; and perspectives of the disability community and those children and families directly affected by the issue. These competing positions have complicated efforts to convince policy-makers to act. The authors propose that in order to become a more potent force in generating greater global priority for the issue, children's care proponents will need to find ways to manage their disagreements, even if these cannot fully be transcended.

¹ Vulnerable households refers to those that are faced with issues that often drive family separation, namely poverty, illness, disability, and lack access to basic medical and education services.

² For the purpose of this ToR, the terms children's care and child protection are used interchangeably, referring to caring for children who are vulnerable to harm (mental, physical, emotional) as well as prevention of harm.

³ Comments documented in a paper internal to the ECFG. This can be shared upon selection of the consultant

⁴ This paper can be shared with the selected consultant. It is not yet made public.

In order to better understand what guides the strategies and priorities of care reform organizations, UBS-OF recently hosted a grantee convening that facilitated a discussion on evidence that informs and is generated within the child care/ protection sector. The discussions revealed that:

- There is greater alignment among grantees regarding *what* needs to be done to achieve care reform in a given country - system-level change, child-focus efforts, prevention and reintegration - but less evidence on *how* change is to be achieved, especially in different contexts. That is, there is less clarity around 'testable' interventions and the contextual factors necessary to achieve change (e.g., behaviours of political and social actors who need to prioritise the issue).
- Lack of a common measurement approach to track both the immediate and longer term tracking of children's welfare, especially across various contexts and geographies, are significant barriers to communicating and documenting impact of programs/ interventions.
- There could be benefit to learning from other sectors – e.g. early childhood development – or areas of work – e.g., violence, nutrition - that have faced similar challenges in terms of being cross-sectoral and a hard-to-define theory of change and measurement frameworks.
- Competition for financial resources and credibility with government discourages shared learning amongst actors in the sector.

There was broad agreement that funding organizations can play an important role in promoting evidence by requiring grantees to include evaluations of the outcomes (not just outputs) of their work. In emphasising 'learning' from evaluations, funders can promote an open discussion on failures and gaps in current programming, policy development and research. However, one of the major barriers is lack of clarity on what organizations are measuring and whether/ how this shapes their learning. Arguably, learning is necessary but not sufficient for change. Hence, the challenge of measurement is also about how indicators need to be deployed to shift mind-sets and political systems.

2. Objectives

Driven in part by our experiences as members of the ECFG and funders of child protection programs, and also due to the sector-level momentum generated by the UNGA reviews of the CRC and the Alternative Care Guidelines, UBS-OF and GHR Foundation have agreed to engage a consultant to support:

1. A review of measurement approaches across the field of children's care (family, alternative, institutional (from major international players to grassroots organizations) and an analysis of what is common across these and what is vastly different;
2. A review of how other sectors may have approached building common measurements and what the care sector could/should consider; and
3. The development of a draft common measurement framework based on the above.

We will facilitate a meeting (online webinar or in-person) to gather feedback from organizations whose frameworks were reviewed and/or who are active in the care sector at the global or regional or local levels.

3. Approach and Methodology

The work should build on what already exists, supplemented by experiences in other sectors. Hence, we anticipate that the assignment would involve (1) a review of the literature and sector/ organizational documents related to the issue of measurement within field of children's care; (2) interviews with Program/ Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) staff in funding and implementing organizations (names of organizations will be provided upon selection) and with evaluation experts (such as within academic institutions and related think tanks); and (3) review of key measurement-related documents from other sectors/ areas that could inform this work (e.g., early childhood development, violence, nutrition).

In regard to interviews, we recommend that the assignment target actors working in children's care, including grantees of UBS-OF and GHR Foundations and of interested members within the ECFG Care Working

Group. We anticipate that the interviews would involve up to 30 organizations (funders and implementers) and up to 20 measurement experts, including those in other sectors. While it may not be feasible to interview all directly, it would be important to ensure that their perspectives are included via reviews of relevant (i.e. measurement-focused) documents and/ or other means such as an online survey. In general, we want to be sure to represent the diverse nature of the organizations working in children's care – in terms of what they provide (e.g., direct services, knowledge/ network management organization, advocacy) and geographical location.

Proposed Timelines and Deliverables

Timeline	Activity/ Deliverable
6 Dec 2019	Proposals received
9 Dec – 20 Dec 2019	Phone interviews with short-listed candidates
6 Jan 2020	Consultant selected
6 Feb 2020	Consultant contracted
28 Feb 2020	Final study protocol submitted
2 Mar – 3 April 2020	Desk review and initial set of interviews completed
w/o 6 April 2020	Check-in with UBS-OF and GHR Foundation (to include progress report)
30 April 2020	Desk review and interviews completed
w/o 11 May 2020	Draft report submitted that summarizes findings from interviews, desk reviews, proposed measurement framework
w/o 25 May 2020	Facilitated meeting to present proposed measurement framework to organizations and invite feedback. Location TBD or via Zoom.
	Meeting report
15 June 2020	Final report on measurement framework. Report to include Theory of Change for programs in the child protection sector, key tracking indicators and associated tools and reporting formats.

Budget for the exercise is estimated to be USD 75,000.

4. Qualifications

We invite experienced and qualified individuals/ organizations to submit a brief proposal (up to 5 pages) describing their methodological approach and estimated time and budget. The proposal should include a brief summary of similar work undertaken in the past and short bios of the project team.

We expect interested parties to have significant experience in monitoring and evaluating programs related to children's care, to be familiar with global and national data systems, and have experience in the development of actionable, sector-level measurement frameworks.