



Request for Proposals

Technical Assistance Consultancy for the Development of Alternative Care System for Children Without Appropriate Care (CWAC) in Liberia

Name of the project: Educating and Protecting Vulnerable Children in Family Settings in Liberia

Proposed start date: November 1, 2013

Duration of assignment: Up to 134 person days. Depending upon the configuration of the team contracted for this assignment, the proposed timeframe for this activity is over a period of no less than two, and no more than six months.

Location: Monrovia with travel to at least three counties outside of the capital.

Reports to: Technical Manager-Child Protection, Save the Children, Liberia.

Save the Children seeks qualified consultant(s) to work with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) of Liberia to review and provide guidance and recommendations on DSW policies, procedures and activities in support of its mandate for the identification, processing, placement, and monitoring of Children Without Appropriate Care (CWAC) into alternative care. In Liberia, priorities for care are: 1) family reunification, 2) kinship living, 3) independent living, 4) domestic and international adoption, 5) foster care, and 6) institutional care. The purpose of this consultancy is to build the capacity of the DSW to develop a comprehensive set of ministry policies and procedures that are in compliance with the law, as well as develop systems, protocols and terms of reference to guide the work of ministry staff at the central head quarters and in the 15 county health offices, and of ministry partners to implement activities for providing alternative care to orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs).

This consultancy will be conducted as a part of the “Educating and Protecting Vulnerable Children in Family Settings in Liberia” project, which is funded by USAID through World Learning Liberia Grants Solicitation and Management program. The consultancy will be managed by Save the Children with substantial involvement of World Learning and DSW. An Advisory Committee will be formed comprising of representatives of four departments of MOHSW, Ministry of Gender and Development, USAID, UNICEF, Program Learning Group, and other

key child protection stakeholders. This committee will offer guidance at various stages of the assignment.

Background and Justification

The DSW of the MOHSW in Liberia is the primary governmental entity responsible by law to protect the rights of vulnerable and orphaned children in the country. Core to the DSW's legal mandate, as articulated in the 2011 *Children's Act*, is to coordinate and arrange for alternative care "a) when it would not be in the best interest of the child to be brought up by either biological parent, if such parents are alive; or b) in cases where the biological parents are unsuitable, deceased, or absent, and the child cannot be brought up or fostered by a relative."

Due largely to 14 years of civil unrest and challenging economic circumstances in the country, there are an estimated 4,274 children living in alternative care institutions in Liberia. There is no reliable data regarding the number of these children that are legitimately to be considered orphans. Many have been placed in institutions due to a dire economic or social situation at home, are there due to being in contact with the law or "delinquency at home", or have been voluntarily placed in an institution that claims to be a boarding school, religious school, or similar institution.

The (largely privately-owned) child welfare institutions in the country provide a wide range of care – from legitimate orphanages that provide proper care, to those with deplorable conditions, seemingly run for sole purpose of generating profit – with anecdotal evidence suggesting that any number may be forced labor institutions. As was noted in the 2008 *Liberia: Key Factors of Child Vulnerability* study commissioned by the USAID Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF):

In 1989, prior to the war, there were only 10 orphanages in Liberia; by 2006 there were 108 with 5,106 children (2,771 boys and 2,335 girls) in residence. While this growth may be indirectly attributable to the war, it was not due to war-related orphaning. The vast majority of children in Government accredited orphanages in Liberia have one or both parents living, and there is no reason to think that the situation differs in non-accredited orphanages.^[1] Children enter these institutions primarily through recruitment by orphanage proprietors and their associates. Based on a review of relevant documents and interviews with a number of informants, it appears that motivations for this recruitment primarily include a mix of religious evangelism, making children available for international adoption and well-intentioned but poorly executed efforts to help poor children. Poverty appears to be a primary factor pushing families to allow their children to be taken to institutions, where they hope education may be available.

¹ Note: According to the DSW, the government did not accredit a large number of orphanages; however many were provided government subsidies independent of accreditation.

Between August 2005 and June 2006, a consultant hired by UNICEF and seconded to the MOHSW, carried out a rapid, country-wide review of orphanages in Liberia. Of these institutions, 49 had been accredited by the Government, while 59 were not accredited. Of the total of 108 institutions, 45 were found to be well below the national standards established for such facilities in 1999. Among the non-accredited institutions, the study found that all “have deplorable and congested sleeping areas which contributed to poor health and hygiene of the children.” While boys and girls sleep in separate rooms, often there are no doors. Among the accredited institutions, all were found to have “poor managerial child care practices (such as protection, security, hygiene/sanitation, etc.).” Systems for keeping records on the children ranged from poor to fundamentally distorted, as it was reported to be common practice even among the accredited institutions to change children’s names on arrival.

Following the recommendations of that assessment, the Government of Liberia (GoL) passed the *Children’s Act of 2011*. The objective of the Act is “to facilitate the respect, protection, promotion, and provision of the realization of child rights in order to make maximum contribution to the survival, development, participation, and protection of every child in Liberia.”

In addition to setting standards for the protection of children’s rights in the country, and providing a framework for community-based decision-making on the welfare of children, the Child’s Law (as it is commonly known) also solidified the standards for the accreditation of care institutions, and the provision of alternative care (as a priority over orphanages) for children who are legitimately orphaned and those being deinstitutionalized. As the ministry mandated with enforcing or coordinating these core components of the law (among others), the MOHSW/DSW is responsible for the following:

- Evaluation and accreditation of child welfare institutions, enforcement of the institution accreditation regime, and closure of institutions that do not meet the accreditation standards.
- Deinstitutionalization of children, both as a result of closure of non-accredited institutions, and as a general GoL policy. As the law states: “Institutionalization of any child shall be a last resort and, in any case, policies, decisions, and actions on alternative care shall be oriented towards the realization of the child’s right to live in a familial environment with her or his parent or parents.”
- Engagement with formal and informal community structures, other governmental institutions, and national and international partners, for the identification and referral of OVC and CWAC.
- The provision of alternative care to “Any child temporarily or permanently removed from her or his parent or parents or family environment, or in whose own best

interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance.”

Since 2009, when the DSW partnered with UNICEF on an ambitious deinstitutionalization program (known as the D-plan), of the 86 child welfare institutions in the country, 14 have been accredited, 26 have been closed or slated for closure, and the remainder should be evaluated and either accredited or closed in the coming year. Aside from a general lack of resources to support the accreditation and closure process, however, the DSW is finding it increasingly difficult to find alternative accommodation (let alone alternative solutions) for those children who cannot return to their immediate families. The same holds true for the general push toward deinstitutionalizing children.

Pressure is therefore mounting for the provision of alternative care – both as a function of government policy, and as a function of relocating those who are in institutions – at present, the only option available for many is to be moved to or placed in other facilities, the majority of which are themselves still not accredited, and/or have reached or surpassed their maximum population (in some cases by up to 200-300 percent).

The government faces a number of challenges with the accreditation process. Some experts in the country believe that there is difficulty with the current accreditation process because it mandates rather high standards for alternative care institutions. The intent of the standards was to enforce closure of orphanages that do not ensure minimum conditions, but this may serve to undermine government authority as children continue to stay in unregistered orphanages, many of which continue to receive government subsidies.

Generally speaking, there are three categories of children in need of legitimate alternative care that fall under the jurisdiction of the DSW: 1) Abandoned children in need of care and protection 2) Children in orphanages without trace of family and 3) Juveniles in conflict with the Law and/or being rejected by their families due to “delinquency”.

Alternative care, as defined by the DSW, is divided into the following categories:

Kinship

Although recognized as a preferred care option, the placing of CWACs with extended family is currently done on an ad hoc and informal basis, with little to no formal mechanisms at the DSW for the recognition, placement, and monitoring of the child’s wellbeing in kinship settings.

Adoption

Domestic adoptions are both legal and viable alternative care options; however, largely due to economic and cultural reasons, domestic adoptions (of children who are not direct relatives) are occurring at a low rate. A moratorium on international adoptions was put into place by the GoL in January of 2009; however the government has made clear its intent to repeal it in the

near future, and the DSW therefore understands the need to create a mechanism through which domestic adoptions may be increased, and international adoptions appropriately processed, regulated and monitored to avoid the mistakes that led to the 2009 moratorium.

Foster Care

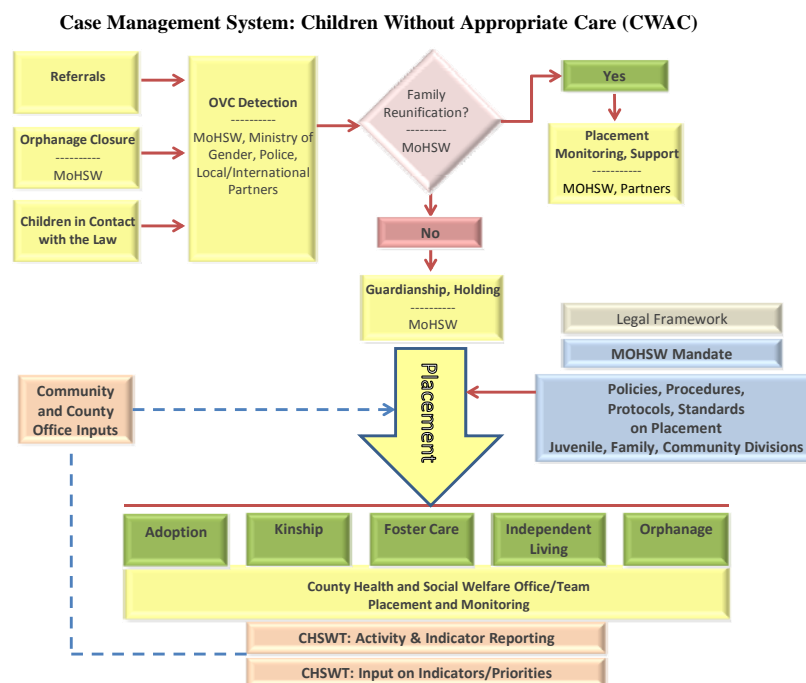
Although recognized by the *Children's Law*, and viewed by the DSW as a viable option, no formal foster care system currently exists in the country; the DSW has however placed children in foster care on an informal basis, without a legal or regulatory framework guiding that placement.

Independent Living

As with kinship, no formal definition and monitoring mechanisms currently exists for the DSW to engage or support independent living as a viable option.

In sum, activities of the DSW in support of alternative care options have been rather informal and limited. The DSW has therefore recognized the need to develop a robust identification, care, and monitoring system that governs the department's response to the scenarios described above, as is illustrated in the following graphic.

Desired DSW Alternative Care System



Goal and Objectives

The goal of the consultancy is to contribute to creating an effective alternate care system that protects the rights of children without appropriate care in accordance with the GoL Children's Act of 2011, and international standards and best practices.

The objectives of the program are as follows:

- To clarify the DSW's legally-mandated roles and responsibilities regarding the identification, placement, and care of CWACs;
- To develop a framework through which the DSW intakes, processes and provides solutions and monitoring for CWACs under its jurisdiction;
- To develop the institutional capacities of the MOHSW/DSW to execute that framework.

Scope of Activities

Save the Children seeks qualified consultant(s) to undertake a comprehensive technical assistance program on alternative care for orphaned and vulnerable children in Liberia. The successful candidate (s) will partner with Save the Children, World Learning and the DSW to describe and assess the current system/activities of the DSW, analyze the existing legal framework, guidelines, protocols, and actors, and produce detailed recommendations for the DSW to develop a comprehensive alternative care system that includes identification and referral mechanisms, and institutional policies, procedures and protocols for the placement of CWAC in adoptive families, kinship care, foster care, independent living arrangements, and (as a last resort) orphanages.

This work will require a variety of research and data collection activities, including, but not limited to, a comprehensive desk review, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions and interviews with key informants. The consultant (s) will analyze and present the results of the research, discuss recommendations with relevant actors, and develop detailed solutions after receiving approval of those recommendations from the DSW, Save the Children and World Learning. Those solutions will build the institutional capacity of the DSW through improved and more responsive structures, systems and human capacities to implement its mandate in support of identification, placement, and monitoring of children in alternative care.

Terms of Reference for the Contracted Consultant(s)

- Conduct desk review of all relevant legal and policy documents, including but not limited to the *National Social Welfare Policy and Plan*, the *Essential Package of Social Services*, the Children's Act of 2011, standards and regulations governing alternative care in Liberia, the Juvenile Procedural Code, the Domestic Relations Law, and other relevant GoL, ministerial and child protection documents;

- Through individual and groups stakeholder interviews, conduct an assessment of formal and informal care programs in existence or under consideration in Liberia, including kinship, foster care, adoption and independent living;
- Explore with Save the Children, World Learning, and the DSW alternative care options in Liberia; explore potential models from other African countries as applicable to the context of Liberia;
- Develop an inception report for the approval of Save the Children, World Learning, and the DSW which provides a conceptual framework and policy recommendations for the development of a comprehensive alternative care system for CWAC in Liberia. Such should include recommendations on amending/adjusting the current regulatory framework, as well as the development of new regulations and guidelines where necessary and appropriate;
- Develop for the approval of the DSW, Save the Children, and World Learning, a draft plan to build the capacity of the DSW to implement the conceptual framework. Such should include recommendations on institutional regulations, systems, policies and procedures, and human capacities needed to guide the work of the DSW to implement the recommended conceptual framework;
- Recommend, contribute to, and lead the design of appropriate interventions intended to build the capacity of the MOHSW/DSW to implement its child protection and alternative care mandate.

Anticipated Results

The consultant (s) will work with Save the Children, World Learning and the DSW to produce the following results:

- All relevant issues and options related to alternative care for CWAC in Liberia analyzed, and DSW institutional mandate fully understood;
- Conceptual framework for developing an alternative care system in Liberia (in accordance with the Children's Act of 2011, other relevant/salient GoL legislation or regulation, and international standards) developed, and adopted by the DSW;
- Necessary capacity of DSW to implement alternative care system understood and articulated;
- Capacity-building and programmatic work plan approved by DSW.

Deliverables

The consultancy will produce the following deliverables:

- A comprehensive report which analyzes all relevant issues and opportunities related to alternative care in Liberia approved by the DSW;

- Occasional (weekly) briefings/updates to the DSW, Save the Children and World Learning on progress of the assessment;
- Draft report on conceptual policy framework;
- Guidelines and regulations for foster care, kinship care and independent living;
- Draft capacity-building plan for DSW on making the policy framework operational;
- Draft proposal for piloting foster care in two counties;
- Final report that synthesizes all of the above, and provides a detailed review of all activities, challenges and opportunities realized as a result of the program.

Responsibilities of the Consultant (s) and Save the Children:

The Consultant (s) are expected to complete the following

1. To submit letter of intent and a proposal in accordance with the guidance provided below.;
2. Upon award of the consultancy:
 - a. To arrange and pay for international travel to/from Liberia;
 - b. To offer technical assistance in accordance with the scope of work outlined above, and methodologies, agenda and materials as outlined in the provider's response to this RFP;
 - c. To coordinate all activities with Save the Children, the DSW, World Learning, and other stakeholders as appropriate and as agreed with Save the Children;
 - d. To submit the deliverables detailed above to Save the Children;
 - e. To submit the final report no later than two weeks after the end of the consultancy.

Save the Children will facilitate and provide all arrangements and support services/facilities for the work of the consultant in Liberia. These include:

- Provision of background and reference documents;
- Provision of transport service for the work, including airport pick up and dropping services;
- Provision of accommodation at a Save the Children guesthouse or hotel as applicable during the entirety of the Consultancy;
- Provision of working space within Save the Children's office in Monrovia and field offices;
- Facilitating contacts and meetings with relevant stakeholders;

Person specification of the Consultant (s)

The assignment will be conducted by qualified expert (s) in social work, public health, child rights protection or other relevant background with the following skills and experience:

- Experience and expertise conducting research and assessment on alternative care or similar child protection issues (having a team member from Liberia is encouraged);
- Masters in Social Work, International Development Studies, Public Health or related studies;
- Extensive experience in issues relating to alternative care and child protection in developing countries;
- Experience working in African or similar context preferred;
- Extensive experience working with and collaborating with Government ministries, especially Government Department of Social Welfare and multiple international institutions;
- Demonstrates strong commitment to Save the Children's mission, vision and value;
- Previous experience with child rights programming will be an advantage;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality, age sensitivity and fully complies with Save the Children's Child Protection Policy and Guidelines.

Timeline for Q & A and submission of proposals

September 23, 2013 **Letter of intent** – Written intent to submit an offer should be emailed to the address below. The letter of intent is of course non-binding, and will be used solely to gauge the level of interest of potential bidders. Proposals submitted by bidders who have not responded with a letter of intent will still be considered. However, Save the Children reserves to cancel and/or re-issue this RFP should interest be gauged as insufficient.

September 30, 2013 **Submission of questions** – Questions regarding the RFP should be emailed to the address below. Answers to all pertinent questions will be distributed to those potential bidders who have responded with a letter of intent.

October 7, 2013 **Proposal submission** – Proposals (technical and financial) must be emailed to the address below. Financial proposal should be prepared following the template given as attachment I. Proposals received after that deadline may be considered non-responsive and ineligible.

Please e-mail letters of intent, questions, and proposals to:

laila.khondkar@savethechildren.org

Thank you for your interest and cooperation.

Attachment I: Standard Budget of Anticipated Expenses

Please fill in the relevant line items only. The totals will calculate automatically through the formulas embedded in the Excel worksheet. Double click anywhere on the spreadsheet for the Excel features to be activated.

Budget of Anticipated Expenses

Program Title:

Program Provider:

Location: Monrovia, Liberia

Program Dates:

	Description	Unit	Number of Units	Per Unit Cost	Unit	Number of Units	Total Amount
I.	Contractor Services						
	Service Provider Fees						-
	Service Provider Support Personnel (if any)						-
				Sub Total Contractor Services:			-
II.	Travel						
	International Travel	Airfare					0
	Airport Transfer						0
	Domestic Travel	Save the Children to Fund (DO NOT FILL)					0
	Accommodation	Person			Days		0
	Per-diem						0
				Sub Total Travel:			-
III.	Materials and Supplies						
	Production of Materials (if any)						0
	Printing/Photocopying	Save the Children to Fund (DO NOT FILL)					0
	Supplies	Save the Children to Fund (DO NOT FILL)					0
	Other (please specify)						0
				Sub Total Materials:			-
IV.	Support Costs						
	Admin/Logistical Support	Save the Children to Fund (DO NOT FILL)					0
				Sub Total Support:			-
						Total:	-