

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SERVICE CONTRACTING

Assignment	Review and Strengthening of Local Private Sector Engagement models for management of rural water supply facilities in Nigeria
Location	Hybrid (time shared between desk research and field data collection)
Duration	10 Months
Estimate number of working days	140 working days (For the entire Team)
Start date	15 December 2025
End date	15 October 2026
Reporting to	WASH Manager

1. JUSTIFICATION/BACKGROUND

Access to basic water remains a challenge in Nigeria, with millions of people lacking access to functional facilities. According to the WASHNORM Survey in 2021, 33.3% of Nigerians (or 73 million people) do not have access to basic water services. This issue further disproportionately affects low-income households and marginalised communities, where lack of access to basic water services is even higher at 57.3%. Furthermore, over 47% of public water facilities are non-functional at any given time, primarily due to the absence of a reliable operation and maintenance (O&M) mechanism, and only 7% of all publicly used water points have a tariff system in place.

To address this sustainability challenge, UNICEF has, over the past years, designed and implemented some water supply Facility Management Models in rural communities. A National Guideline for Village level Operation and Maintenance was developed by the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation (FMWRS) with UNICEF support in 2019. Subsequently, several states and the FMWRS have piloted models to strengthen sustainability of water services, including with the support of UNICEF. These models have demonstrated promising results in restoring and sustaining water services. Most promising is a tailored Public-Private-Community Partnership (PPCP) model implemented in Northwest Nigeria, where 67 water facilities were set up to be managed by SMEs as operators engaged through PPCP contracts, directly benefitting about 293,000 people., UNICEF now aims to review and document the model, assess the impact and build evidence to support government authorities in developing and adopting policies, strategies, and toolkits that enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage effectively in the O&M of water facilities. Early anecdotal results from the PPCP initiative indicate that SME

engagement as Water Operators can significantly improve the sustainability of water service delivery in Nigeria—accelerating WASH outcomes for vulnerable populations.

In view of the above, UNICEF is seeking to engage a consultant or firm to review, assess the impact, and identify and document the lessons and evidence; and develop policies, guidelines, strategies, and toolkits that enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage effectively in the O&M of water facilities. From the USAID-funded IWASH project in Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara States, 67 water facility operators were engaged by communities to operate and manage their water supply facilities. The model has significantly improved the functionality of targeted water facilities, reducing downtime for solar-powered systems since 2023. This has saved communities an estimated 6,700 hours daily previously spent fetching water from distant sources. Additionally, about 130 direct jobs were created for SME technicians/Local Area Mechanics, with 60% filled by women and youth.

By identifying the success factors, the SMEs can then effectively engage with communities and the Government and remove the core barriers faced by these business owners, enabling them to better manage water supply facilities in rural communities.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this consultancy is to strengthen the private sector (PS) or SMEs engagement in water facility management; this will be achieved through the following outputs:

- Review the private sector engagement model in the Northwest states to determine its ability to: a) improve access to improved water (and sanitation) services, b) contribution to improve sustainability of water services (FIETS - financial, institutional, environmental, technical, social), and c) improve overall community satisfaction.
- Compare the results achieved in communities where PPCP models were piloted vs. those that did not engage the private sector or are managed by WASHCOMs.
- Determine key success factors of PPCP model, and areas for improvement.
- Assess the potential of the model to scale to other parts of Nigeria.
- Draft guidelines for engaging PS in management of water supply facilities

3. SCOPE OF THE WORK (WORK ASSIGNMENT)

This consultancy will cover, a) review and evidence generation, b) strengthening the already existing SME engagement models, and c) participatory development of guidelines for engaging the private sector in the operation and management of water supply facilities.

Task A: Evidence Generation

The Consultant is expected to work with UNICEF to develop a tool for qualitative and quantitative review of PPCP models in comparison with WASHCOM managed models in rural water supply delivery. Evidence for PPCP will come from a sample of the 67 (at least 50%) communities where the SME operated model is in place, while the consultant will identify at least five ‘control’ cases with similar age and socio-economic characteristics. The tools will be used to guide discussions

with stakeholders in those 50% PPCP sites including the SMEs, LGAs, communities, and State government authorities.

The Consultant will also design the data collection process, define the 'control' and 'treatment' groups, duration for quantitative and qualitative data collection, and geographic area to cover for the data collection. The Consultant will also analyze the data, draw lessons with evidence, challenges and best practices from the communities and produce an evidence report. As a part of the evidence report, at least 10 case studies (five from the control group and five from the treatment group), and a record of success factors and gaps in each of the case studies needs to be produced.

Task B: Strengthen the Private Sector Model

The next phase of the assignment is to work with UNICEF to strengthen the PS/SME engagement model for water supply facilities management. This will be based on challenges and gaps identified from the evidence generation phase and the identified needs of the private sector operators. The strengthening process must be tailored toward supporting the operators to be viable and sustainable (financial sustainability needs to be assessed using realistic estimates of monthly expenditure and incomes), and to grow and scale, and possibly attract additional financing to support their business expansion. The Consultant will design the content and duration of the strengthening part of the programme, in consultation with the LGAs, communities, private operators and UNICEF team.

Part of the process of strengthening the private sector model by the Consultant will be handholding/follow-up support for at least four months. During this timeframe, the Consultant will carry out activities such as coaching and mentorship. Other support should also be provided based on the identified needs of the operators in the private sector.

Task C: Guidelines for Engaging the Private Sector

The Consultant will utilize findings from Task A and B to develop guidelines for the engagement of the private sector in the operation and management of water supply facilities that can be deployed anywhere in the country. Key components of the guideline will include framework for financial sustainability, water quality monitoring, gender and social inclusion and regular monitoring and reporting. The guidelines will clearly identify roles that will be played by different stakeholders – communities, the private sector, and the government/regulator – as well as steps to follow to engage the private sector. For this phase, the consultant is expected to visit another four states (e.g. Kaduna, Adamawa and other two states) where PS engagement models are being tried and are potentially feasible.

The draft guidelines will be shared in a workshop with the representatives of states where consultation took place and the FMWRS and subsequently improved based on their feedback received in the workshop.

4. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

In line with the above objectives and tasks, the Consultant will closely work with the UNICEF and partners to produce the following deliverables:

Deliverable 1: An inception report with the preliminary design and methodology of PPCP review in Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara state, with proposed tools and report outline and the overall approach that will be adopted by the consultant to complete each of task A, B and C above. The tools and methodology needs to consider ethical and safeguarding standards, and approved by UNICEF.

Deliverable 2: A detailed evidence report, including methodology, the process and tools used, detailed findings, success factors, gaps and other relevant information on the private sector operated water facility management models in Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara states. The documents should clearly assess the success against key sustainability parameters (FIETS¹). This will include presentation and dissemination materials such as summary infographics, slide decks and other materials prepared for sharing the findings with UNICEF and other stakeholders. At least 10 case studies (5 that capture the success of PPCP in areas or facilities where it was used and 5 for areas or facilities where PPCP was not used or implemented) will be produced as a part of the evidence document, with analytical evidence, that can appropriately compare facilities with PPCP with the control facilities without PPCP.

Deliverable 3: Capacity building plan and technical content developed for strengthening of private sector operators in the Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara states.

Deliverable 4: Capacity building support delivered as per plan and monthly reports on the progress of strengthening the 15 private sector operators documented and submitted. The 15 SME operated facilities will be identified in consultation with UNICEF team in Sokoto and Abuja.

Deliverable 5: Draft of guidelines for engaging private sector in managing rural water services for consultation state and federal level stakeholders. Following approval of the draft from UNICEF, agenda, PPTs and reference materials for the consultation workshop needs to be shared.

Deliverable 6: Presentation of the draft guidelines in the workshop to disseminate findings of the review and to seek feedback for stakeholders on the guidelines for engaging private sector in managing water facilities. Workshop costs and local coordination can be managed by UNICEF team.

Deliverable 7: Final draft of the guidelines for engaging private sector engagement in the management of water supply facilities in rural areas with clearly defined steps, roles, players/stakeholders, minimum standards etc.

Deliverable 8: Produce three knowledge documents in the form of UNICEF field note, a briefing paper, and a policy brief on PS engagement in water facility management, to be determined by the assessment findings and on consultation and approval by UNICEF.

5. REALISTIC DELIVERY DATES AND DETAILS ON HOW THE WORK MUST BE DELIVERED

Activity	Deliverable	When Due
1. Inception meetings with UNICEF and other government partners detailing the workplan, tools and working modalities	Inception report with tools (for qualitative and quantitative) data collection and analysis finalised	15 January 2026
2. Collect qualitative and quantitative data from the treatment group and control group and draft a detailed evidence report, including methodology, the process and tools used, detailed findings, success factors, gaps and other relevant information	Draft of evidence paper on the private sector operated water facility management models in Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara states, including 10 case studies (five from control group and five from treatment group).	30 April 2026
3. Develop capacity building plan to strengthen private sector operators	A detailed process, steps, milestone and content to strengthen private sector operators.	30 April 2026
4. Train and guide 15 Private sector operators as per capacity building plan approved (ref. deliverable 3)	Private sector strengthened and monthly updates of private operators' progress shared with UNICEF and partners at the State level	31 July 2026
5. Draft guidelines for private sector engagement in operation and maintenance of water supply facilities in participatory way	Draft guidelines for engagement of private sector operators	31 July 2026
6. Organize a consultation workshop with state authorities	Consultation workshop with state authorities (workshop cost will be arranged by UNICEF, however, technical facilitation will be done by the consultant).	31 August 2026
7. Revise and prepare final draft of guidelines for engaging PS in water services management	Final guidelines for engaging private sector in water supply management	10 Sept 2026
8. Draft knowledge documents in the form of UNICEF field note, a briefing paper, and a policy brief on PS engagement in water facility management approved by UNICEF	Three knowledge documents in the form of UNICEF field note, a briefing paper, and a policy brief	15 October 2026

6. OFFICIAL TRAVEL INVOLVED

All travels costs and associated risks shall be at the expense of the consultant / firms and should be included in the financial proposal.

7. DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS, SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE, OR EXPERIENCE

Prospective experts or firms for this consultancy should have a track record of at least five years of relevant experience in conducting similar assignments and must have carried out similar projects with other development actors (e.g. UNICEF or other UN agencies, donors, or Non-Governmental Organizations). Experience working with ethnically diverse populations, and in northern Nigeria is an advantage.

The organization should have competent and committed staff that will contribute to consultancy with the following minimum experts, and supported by qualified technical staff to conduct the scope of works:

- a. **Team Leader** with a minimum of seven years' experience in leading similar consultancies and assignments with a university degree in Business Administration, Project Management, and Entrepreneurship, or any other related field. The Team Leader will be responsible for the overall coordination of assignment with UNICEF and for all deliverables. This role requires solid experience in leading and implementing business incubation programmes in Nigeria.
- b. **Business experts and community engagement experts:** at least two (2) experts in business with master's degrees, ideally with a focus on social businesses, or businesses that generate profit while providing a social good or service.
- c. **Experience:** The organization should have at least five years of experience in providing incubation services for businesses, a proven track record in servicing and supporting businesses to grow and attract investments and demonstrate that it has existing clients receiving similar services. Experience supporting businesses in the WASH or environment sector, micro and small businesses, and businesses operating in the northern states of Nigeria will be an added advantage. In addition, the firm must also show ability to align its goals with UNICEF's strategic goals and show excellent analytical, communications, report writing, planning, organizational and time management skills.

The firm is responsible for arranging the needed human resources and all travel and logistics arrangements for the successful conduct of the partnership.

8. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR EVALUATION OF RESULTS

Regular progress reports will be expected and agreed upon between UNICEF and the Consultant on signing of the partnership agreement.

Key performance indicators will include:

- a. Draft programme document within two weeks of selection, and document within four weeks detailing the approach and modality to conduct the assignment. This would also include outlining the human resources needed at various stages.
- b. Quality content developed for the strengthening of private operators based on assessed needs and identified challenges.
- c. Strengthening of private sector operators delivered

- d. Monthly reports after strengthening the private sector operators submitted, with monthly private operator progress
- e. Guidelines for engagement of private sector operators developed in consultation with state authorities

9. FREQUENCY OF REVIEWS

There shall be at least monthly discussions between UNICEF and the selected consultant during the duration of the consultancy to review progress and ensure the assignment is on track to meet its objectives. Additional meetings may be required and will be agreed upon by both partners.

10. CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Interested parties are to submit their proposal with a copy of their methodology and approach to the work, previous work samples, client references, all-inclusive financial proposal, and the CV of the staff or resource people they will be engaging to deliver on the tasks for this partnership.

Applications shall therefore contain the following required documentation:

Technical proposal:

- A technical proposal with a brief cover letter and understanding of the assignment is required.
- Based on the proposed timetable in the TOR, a proposal of the detailed methodology, tentative work plan, and schedule is required.
- Updated profiles/ CVs of the team members and their estimated time inputs listing similar experiences/ assignments, highlighting those focused on conducting learning needs assessment and training.
- Two examples of the firm's engagement in similar activities and assignments.
- Two references from previous clients the firm have worked with (email address and phone number)

Financial Proposal:

- A financial proposal with a breakdown of all costs to be charged to UNICEF. This includes the estimated number of working days, staff costs outlining the staff position, all administrative costs, travel costs, as well as any additional requirements needed to execute on the partnership or that might have an impact on the cost or submission of the deliverables. Travel expenses should be based on the most direct route and economy fare. Quotations for business class fare will not be considered.

11. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND WEIGHTING CRITERIA

70% technical, 30% financial = 100% total

Submitted proposals will be assessed using the Cumulative Analysis Method. All requests for proposals will be weighed according to the technical (70%) and financial considerations (30%).

Below are the criteria and points for technical and financial proposals.

Technical proposal:

	Technical Criteria	Technical sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Overall response	Completeness, organization, and presentation of the proposal	5
		Overall concordance between RFP requirements and proposal	5
	Maximum points		10
2	Consultancy firm and key personnel	Range and depth of experience with similar assignments, and client references	20
		Key personnel: relevant experiences and qualifications	10
		Policy on Child labor (articulate policies for the protection & safeguarding of children)	5
	Maximum points		35
3	Strength of technical proposal	Understanding of the objectives of the consultancy	5
		Technical quality and relevance of the proposal to the Call for EOI; proven experience of the proposed team in the scope of work. Knowledge of the sanitation context in Nigeria, and context for businesses operating in northern Nigeria.	20
	Maximum points		25
	Total Maximum points		70

Minimum technical score: 70% of 70 points = 49 points

Financial proposal:

The financial proposal shall be evaluated based on the lowest responsive bidder. Therefore, only the firms that meet at least the minimum score on the technical proposal shall be considered for financial proposal review.

12. CONDITIONS

- The organization will work on their computer(s) and use their office resources and materials to execute this assignment. **The financial proposal shall be inclusive of all office administrative costs**
- All travel costs shall be covered fully by the partners as part of their cost for delivery on the partnership.

- Intellectual property & future use - All training curricula, tools, manuals, slide decks, videos, dashboards, case studies, or other materials produced — whether in draft or final form — will be treated as work-for-hire. Full ownership and unlimited, royalty-free usage rights shall rest with UNICEF. Bidders must confirm acceptance of this clause in their proposal.

Enquiries:

Please direct any enquiries to: Suleiman Adamu at sadamu@unicef.org, Phillip Sule psule@unicef.org (copy David Cevallos at dflorescevallos@unicef.org)

Proposals with all supporting documents should be addressed to:

UNICEF Nigeria Country office Bids
ngrsupply@unicef.org