Call for Consultant (P3) – WHO anaemia project

Terms of reference

Title: Consultant (P3) – Anaemia project

Contract type: Consultant

Duration of contract: 12 months

Starting date: 1 December 2018

Application deadline: 18 November 2018

Duty station: Geneva, Switzerland

Organization unit: World Health Organization/Noncommunicable Disease and Mental Health/Department of Nutrition for Health and Development/ Evidence and Programme Guidance Unit

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) has set a solid ambition in nutrition for 2016-2025, with the vision of a world free from all forms of malnutrition where all people achieve health and well-being. The mission of WHO Department of Nutrition for Health and Development (NHD) is to work with Member States and their partners to ensure universal access to effective nutrition actions and to healthy and sustainable diets. NHD coordinates nutrition efforts within the Organization with three functions that represent the core of WHO work in nutrition: leadership, guidance and monitoring. Countries have agreed on three interrelated sets of global targets: Global Nutrition Targets 2025, Noncommunicable Disease Targets and Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Providing solid guidance on maternal, infant and young child nutrition and updating guidance on thresholds for defining anaemia in individuals and populations helps inform effective actions for reaching these targets.

The WHO work on anaemia is conducted in alignment with WHO 13th General Programme of Work, focusing on three strategic priorities that address universal health coverage, health emergencies and promoting healthier populations.

Anaemia is a condition in which the number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiologic needs, which vary by age, sex, elevation above sea level, smoking, and pregnancy status. Accurate characterisation of anaemia is critical to determining the burden and distribution of this problem, for including public health interventions, and for clinical care of patients as part of the essential quality health services to universal health coverage. The current WHO threshold haemoglobin concentration for
diagnosis of anaemia is presently defined using a putative 95% reference range in normal individuals adjusted for age, sex and pregnancy status, with corrections for altitude and smoking status.

WHO is updating guidelines for use and interpretation of haemoglobin concentrations to diagnose anaemia at the individual and at the population level and also to monitor progress of the global nutrition target on anaemia reduction in women. This project is being developed following established WHO guideline development procedures, and will culminate with an updated guideline for clinical and public health use.

This project closely aligns with WHO mandate as outlined in the draft thirteenth general programme of work 2019-2023. Specifically, this project will develop improved normative guidance for anaemia control, which will enable WHO to accurately measure impact of nutrition specific and sensitive programmes aiming to achieve the World Health Assembly 2025 targets. It will also enhance the capacity of WHO to provide technical assistance to health systems. Ultimately, this work will contribute towards achievement of WHO’s strategic priorities.

The project started with a prioritization exercise asking more than 4,000 technical experts, researchers, blood banks, policy makers and programme implementers to identify priority questions to understand the key information and knowledge that would enable a revised definition of haemoglobin thresholds, in the form of a prioritized list of scoping questions (http://www.who.int/nutrition/events/2016_online_consultation_haemoglobin_anaemia/en/). Over 500 questions from more than 150 respondents were received and consolidated into 58 questions across six categories that were ranked as the most relevant aspects on anaemia diagnosis.

Based on the questions and research needs that scored highest by stakeholders, a call for authors was launched to invite experts on the six categories identified through the prioritization exercise and on diverse topics related to the use and interpretation of haemoglobin concentrations to diagnose anaemia in individuals and in populations (http://www.who.int/nutrition/callforauthors_anaemia_status/en/). Thirty-three paper proposals covering 11 of 12 topics were received and 17 papers were commissioned after editorial review.

In November 2017 the Evidence and Programme Guidance Unit, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development of the World Health Organization convened the technical meeting: Use and interpretation of haemoglobin concentrations for assessing anaemia status in individuals and populations. During that meeting commissioned papers and case studies were presented. One of the outcomes of the WHO project on reviewing haemoglobin thresholds was the publication of a special issue in a peer-review journal, containing the commissioned papers and results from this technical meeting. This special issue is being finalized and the project will continue with the preparation of a scoping document in preparation for a guideline development group meeting.
Tasks and deliverables

Output 1: Final draft of scoping document for discussion in the first Guideline Development Group meeting
   Deliverable 1.1. Draft of a scoping document containing PICO questions and research gaps that will be addressed during the first Guideline Development Group meeting on March 2019.
   Deliverable 1.2. Complementary document containing aspects related to methods, laboratory management and research strategies related to haemoglobin determination and cut-offs definition.

Output 2: Participate in the preparation of the first Guideline Development Group meeting on March 2018.
   Deliverable 2.2. First draft of the agenda and list of participants of the meeting.
   Deliverable 2.3. Participate in the preparation of the meeting, location, invitation letters and logistics.

Output 3: Collaborate in the preparation of additional meetings related to particular aspects to set haemoglobin cutoff points (elevation above sea level, smoking, genetic trail) during 2019. The expected deliverables are the same as outcome 2.

Output 4: Search for data and preparation of a systematic review on iron compounds used on nutrition related interventions and anaemia/iron deficiency treatment.
   Deliverable 4.1. Collaborate in the preparation and/or validation of an extraction sheet for the studies.
   Deliverable 4.2. Review of updated search to select included studies. Participate in data introduction and analysis.
   Deliverable 4.3. Collaborate in writing the review.

Output 5: Collaborate in other ongoing systematic reviews indicated by supervisor. Similar deliverables than outcome 4.

Qualifications

University degree in medicine or health-related areas with experience in developing Cochrane and non-Cochrane systematic reviews.

Post-graduate training in nutrition, statistics, epidemiology, public health and/or micronutrients.

Experience

At least 5 years of experience in health sciences, with focus on nutrition, anaemia and iron deficiency.

Experience with systematic reviews and the Cochrane library.
Other skills

- Excellent analytical skills.
- Excellent organizational skills.
- Demonstrated ability to identify priorities and define realistic priorities and demands.
- Ability to work independently with short deadlines and to produce results under pressure.
- Ability to convene and facilitate agreement among stakeholders.

Languages

Excellent knowledge of English required and a basic level of an additional WHO official language desirable.

Time frame

The consultancy will be for 12 months, starting 1 December 2018.

Place of assignment

The Consultant is expected to perform their work in Geneva, Switzerland.

Financial agreement

A monthly rate is based on Consultants Pay Band P3 level in accordance with the qualifications and experience.

Confidentiality of information

All reports and information are property of WHO and will not be made available to others.

Additional information

The proposal should be prepared and submitted in the English language and should include the following information:

- Completed General Profile filled-in through the http://www.who.int/careers/en/ (download the profile as a PDF document, and include it as part of the e-mail submission);
- Filled in questionnaire; and
- Letter of interest.

Proposals should be submitted to WHO in writing no later than the 18 November, 2018 at 17:00 hours Geneva time (“the closing date”), with subject line of “Consultancy P3 WHO anaemia project”, emailed at the following address: nutrition@who.int

Only candidates under serious consideration will be contacted.