

Roving Caregiver Program: Impact Evaluation

Terms of Reference

Consultancy Type:	Individual / Firm		
Assignment Title:	Impact Evaluation of the Roving Caregivers Program in Belize		
Supervision:	ECD RCG Steering Committee ¹		
Funding Agency:	UNICEF Belize Office (contact Denise Robateau, ECD & Education Officer)		
Contract Date:	June 2018 (7 months)	Duty Station:	Belize

Introduction

The Roving Caregivers Programme (RCP) is a non-formal early childhood intervention for families with children from birth to three years of age. The officers who implement the program, called Rovers, work in their home communities and make regular home visits to families to share information about early development, health, and safety as well as engaging children in play and specific learning and stimulating activities. Rovers model appropriate adult strategies to support children’s cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development during a play period with a child or more children.

The program was launched in 2008 in the Toledo district – specifically the four villages of San Miguel, San Jose, San Marcus, and Laguna. It has since expanded to further villages in Toledo, and to the southside of Belize City, and since 2015 has been fully funded by the Government. The latest stage in the program’s expansion has been the addition of a further 5 Rovers in Belize City, who are funded by the Social Investment Fund (SIF). This brings the number of families to 353 - 209 in southside Belize City, and 144 in 7 villages in Toledo.

Background

It is well recognized that rapid brain development occurs in the first three to four years of life, and that the first 1000 days (from conception to 2 years of age) is a critical window of growth and development. And it is during these 1000 days that interventions will have the greatest impact on outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where the need is greatest. New evidence from the field of neuroscience highlights the effects on brain development and function in the absence of appropriate nurturing care and learning. The Lancet Series (October 2016) on early childhood development stresses the need for holistic programs and the need for urgent increase in multi-sectoral coverage. This is especially true for vulnerable families, who have children at risk of development delays for any number of health and/or social reasons.

The quality of care at home is a major determinant of the child’s development during this period. In this

¹ This committee will be primarily comprised of MHDSTPA officers, including the program manager Ms. Diana Pook, Mrs. Lliani Arthurs - director of the Dept. of Human Services (DHS), Mark Antrobus – the Ministry’s social planner, and Els Arnold the Ministry’s statistician. Officers from MOEYSC and MOH will also be invited to sit on this committee.

context, the engagement of adults in activities with children, the presence of books in the home for the child, and the conditions of care are important indicators of the quality of home care. To support this outcome, the Government of Belize has made Early Childhood Development (ECD) a priority area of focus over the past few years, in a determined effort to ensure all that all children “should be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent, and ready to learn”². Leading this focus and providing vision and direction, is the ECD National Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

One key program in supporting parents to provide a safe, healthy, engaging and stimulating home environment is the Roving Caregivers program, implemented through the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation since 2008.

The review of the program was conducted in 2011³, which looked at the implementation of the RCP model in Belize, assessed the interest among potential stakeholders to collaborate on consolidation and extension of RCP services, and to assess the relevance and quality of the RCP mode of delivery vis-a-vis other ECD and parent oriented programs.

The Ministry now wishes to conduct a comprehensive impact evaluation of the program from its inception, and action relevant recommendations to strengthen the program design and implementation, before it expands coverage to further districts.

Objective

The objective of this consultancy is to conduct an impact evaluation of the RCG program. The evaluation should examine the effects that RCG has had on its beneficiaries, both the targeted children (0-3 years old) and the parents of those children as well, and specifically analyse if the program beneficiaries are any more developed in the areas listed below, than their counterparts who were not part of the program.

- 1) Physical health, well-being and sensory-motor development.
- 2) Social and emotional development.
- 3) Cognitive development
- 4) Communication, language and literacy development.

The evaluation is expected to generate concrete recommendations to enhance the programme’s impact, but also to sharpen its equity focus and maximise the use of available resources, and ultimately help inform the Ministry, as it looks to expand the program to more geographical areas of the country.

Scope of work

²UNICEF. 2002. A World Fit for Children adopted by the UN General Assembly at the 27th Special Session, 10 May 2002: 2.

³ Belize Report, Fortuna Anthony, Consultant for Caribbean Child Support Initiative (CCSI)

The impact evaluation will look primarily on the effects it has had on the beneficiary children, and should answer the following questions:

- i. Are the beneficiaries nutritionally healthy? This should include measures of height for age, weight for age, and weight for height (following the MICS methodology)
- ii. Do children in the program participate in more activities that support early learning at home, including reading books, looking at picture books, telling stories and singing songs?
- iii. Are the children developmentally on track with respect to literacy and numeracy?
- iv. Do RCG children perform better at school, in terms of scorecards and the national BJAT examination?
- v. Are the children developmentally on track with respect to social-emotional behaviours, which can include how children interact with their peers, and can focus on the task at hand without getting distracted

The evaluation should also examine the effect of the program on the primary caregivers of the beneficiaries, to determine:

- i. Do caregivers have a better knowledge of ECD and the importance of positive early childhood stimulation because of the program?
- ii. Do caregivers engage equally with their children with respect to developmental activities?
- iii. Has the program improved parents' parenting competencies, and has it changed parent's views with respect to disciplining their children?

Finally, the impact evaluation should, along with a review of similar home based ECD programs (regionally and internationally) and of recent evidence and research into nurturing care (especially in different household contexts including violence, health risks, and low levels of parenting ability) provide policy and programme design recommendations, including but not limited to:

- i. Beneficiary targeting design: are there more efficient and effective methods of selecting the program's target population?
- ii. Program timeframe: is the current three-year model the best duration for such a program, and is the current program's scheduling and frequency of home visits optimal?
- iii. Program integration and referral: is RCG an integrated program in the wider array of program delivery within the Ministry, how are referrals made to other services (internal and external), and are these referrals made in a timely and systematic manner (especially for those most at risk children, e.g. those differently abled)?
- iv. What are the programmatic costs per beneficiary, and are there efficiency gains that can be made?
- v. Are the RCG curriculum and the materials used with parents and children, appropriate and relevant (in respect to language, age, differently abled children, and gender)?
- vi. The preparation of children transitioning from the 'play' environment at home to the more structured preschool 'learning' setting.

The evaluation should take in account the different environments in Toledo and Belize districts, including cultural norms, especially with respect to gender (are any impacts seen equally in males and females for example), levels of crime and violence, and poverty.

Deliverables and Timeframe

The main deliverables of this consultancy will include, but will not be limited to, the following:

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| 1. Inception Report | 4. Policy Brief and presentation of findings |
| 2. Draft Evaluation Report | 5. Data collection instruments and datasets |
| 3. Final Evaluation Report | |

<i>Deliverable/Activity</i>	<i>Timeframe (2018)</i>						
	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M4</i>	<i>M5</i>	<i>M6</i>	<i>M7</i>
Signing of Contract	■						
Inception Report (1) ⁴		■					
Data Collection			■	■	■		
Data Analysis			■	■	■		
Draft Evaluation Report (2)						■	
Report Validation							■
Report Review							■
Final Report Submission (3)							■
Policy Brief & Presentation (4)							■
Final Project Documentation (5)							■

Qualifications and Competencies:

The suitable consultant/lead consultant should possess a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Development, Social Science or related field and experience working with ECD or similar projects, and demonstrate the combined skill sets below (as an individual or among a team):

- At least seven years of experience in quantitative analysis, especially pertaining to statistical analysis of poverty indicators and skills in creating and maintaining statistical databases;
- Previous proven experience in social programmes/social protection evaluation
- Extensive experience using household survey data;
- Advanced experience with relevant statistical software;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English required;
- Ability to work independently and respond to feedback in a timely and professional manner;
- Excellent organizational skills, attention to detail, and ability to contribute to a team research process.

⁴ The inception report is expected to build on the technical proposal subjected by consultants when applying for the consultancy, having reviewed the data environment, and spoken to both the evaluation steering committee and the main actors involved in the RCG program.

Application

Qualified consultants/firms are invited to submit one copy of their combined financial and technical proposal by email to this address ***social.planner@humandev.gov.bz*** by 5pm Monday the 4th of June, 2018. Please use the subject “Ref #: RCG Impact Evaluation”.

The technical proposals should contain sufficient information to attest that the consulting team/firm possess sufficient academic and professional experience in line with the requirements of this TOR. In addition, the technical proposal should contain the detailed methodology the consulting team/firm proposes to employ will be able meet the objectives of this assignment.