



Quality, Equity, Dignity

A Network for Improving Quality of Care  
for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

## Call for Implementation Research (IR) Concept Proposals:

*To Address Programme Implementation Challenges in The network for improving quality of care for maternal newborn and child health (QED) or Possible Serious Bacterial Infection in Newborns (PSBI) Programme*

Deadline: 27 September 2019

UNICEF and USAID are soliciting letters of intent for implementation research that seeks to address issues that influence the effective implementation of MNCH programmes or services within health systems in eligible countries. **Grants of up to USD \$20,000 will be available to support research studies of up to 10 months duration.**

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 1) Countries implementing maternal, newborn and child quality of care improvement within **The network for improving quality of care for maternal newborn and child health (QED) or PSBI programme countries** with UNICEF/WHO or USAID funding
- 2) Teams comprised of decision-makers of MNCH programmes and services as Principal Investigators, collaborating with in-country researchers are eligible to submit letters of intent in response to this call. Decision-makers are those individuals who are directly involved in implementation of a QED or PSBI programme or service within the health system in an eligible country (a list of eligible countries is provided below). Policymakers, programme managers, district health officers, non-governmental providers, public or private practitioners, and front-line health workers are typical examples of such individuals. Additionally, the research team must include as least one researcher affiliated with an academic or research institution based in the study country. Please note that **both these conditions (in-country Decision-maker + Researcher) must be met** for the proposals to be eligible for funding.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

Concept Notes will be judged on the potential of the research to address a priority topic area(s) as outlined below affecting a national, regional or district (or equivalent) QED or PSBI programme or service. Other criteria that will be taken into account include value for money and institutional capacity. See also criteria for assessment at the end of this call.

### DEADLINES

The deadline for submission of a brief (maximum 5-page) concept note is 27 September 2019.

## HOW TO APPLY

All submissions must be submitted electronically via email to: Debra Jackson, Senior Health Advisor, Health Section, UNICEF at [djackson@unicef.org](mailto:djackson@unicef.org)

The Concept Note should include the following sections:

### Section 1 -

- i. Statement of QED or PSBI implementation problem/challenge
- ii. Priority Theme(s) this addresses (see below)
- iii. Implementation Research Question to be investigated

### Section 2 -

- iv. Description of the programme being researched, e.g. summary details of programme into which the research will be embedded.
- v. Proposed methods (study design, sample, data collection, analysis, ethical considerations)
- vi. How will the results be expected to be used and by whom

### Section 3 -

- vii. Role and Capacity of Decision-Maker, Principle Investigator
- viii. Role and Capacity of In-country Researcher, Co-PI (and institution if applicable)

### Section 4 -

- ix. Time Line (note primary data collection and initial analysis will need to be completed by 1 June 2020)

### Section 5 -

- x. Budget, including explanation/justification of costs.

## THIS CALL

This request for proposals expects proposal from eligible countries which should include the local programme implementer/decision-maker and local researcher, but also the team should engage with both the local USAID Mission and UNICEF Country Office attached to either a USAID or UNICEF/WHO funded QED or PSBI project along the designated themes below.

## PRIORITY IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH THEMES

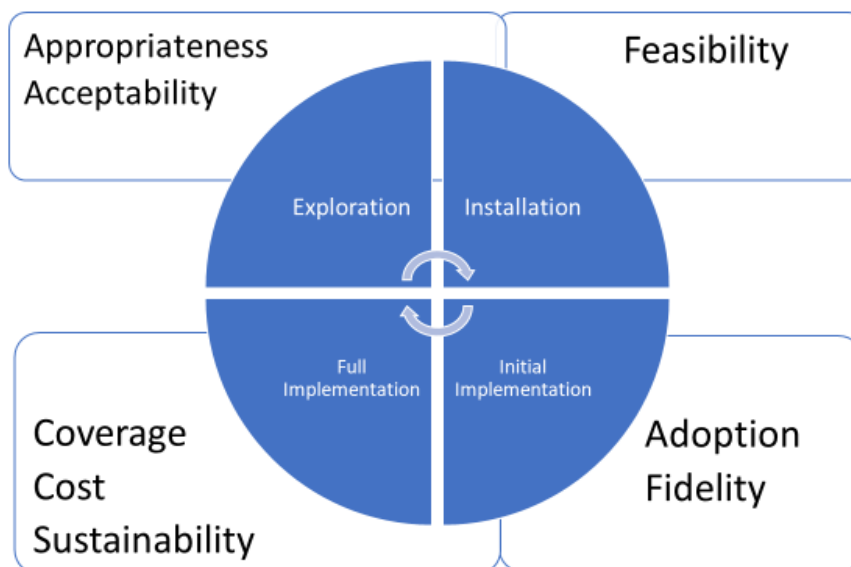
The RFP will focus on implementation research relating to QED or PSBI programmes broadly, with particular emphasis on soliciting studies that explore one or more of the following priority issues:

- **Implementing Quality of Care Programmes, in particular:**
  - **Postnatal care for mothers and babies:** for example (but not limited to) increasing knowledge of women and family members regarding essential nutrition practices and breastfeeding to empower women to make informed choices, and identification of

- risk factors, improve pre-discharge assessment and counselling and appropriate care seeking.
- **Integration of QED and MPDSR/Paediatic Audit at facility level:** How are facilities integrating QI teams and MPDSR/Paediatic Audit teams at facility level.
- **Implementing PSBI programmes, including for example:**
  - PSBI management guidance and tools to improve triage/treatment/referral systems for sick newborns and children at primary health care facilities and at community and district level (Leveraging ongoing work in Eastern and Southern African countries around PSBI to improve paediatric quality of care and the triage/referral of severely sick children).
  - Integration of PSBI into maternal, newborn and child health programmes at all levels of the health system (community, primary health facility and 1st referral facilities),
  - Tools and approaches to help in supervision and mentoring of health workers in PSBI,
  - Tools and approaches to help family integration into care, and experience of care into newborn services

Grants for research projects of 12 months will be granted up to USD \$20,000 depending on the scope and focus of the study, as well as the study setting. Additional funding from other sources should be sought if the budget is anticipated to exceed this amount. This grant is not expected to include programme implementation costs. As this is implementation research it is expected to be on an existing implementation of a USAID or UNICEF/WHO QED or PSBI programme. It can be on implementation questions for early exploration through full implementation stages of an implementation depending on the research question, for example:

## The focus of IR questions





The research supported by this call should aim to:

- Generate knowledge to address QED or PSBI issues that influence the effective implementation of MNCH programmes or services within health systems;
- Strengthen the capacity of decision-makers to generate and use research as a means of addressing implementation barriers encountered in the field.
- Be prepared to share with their colleagues through the existing communities of practice, networks (QED Network, PSBI, learning pods, regional mtgs, etc) and more actively in South-South IR knowledge management and dissemination beyond publications/reports.

To support this work, selected teams will be provided with training and ongoing technical support by expert facilitators organized through UNICEF and USAID to further develop and implement their ideas using appropriate research methods.

## WHAT IS IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH?

Despite abundant evidence on the efficacy of affordable, life-saving interventions, challenges are often encountered when implementing these interventions in diverse settings and within the wide range of existing health systems that limits their effectiveness. Research is needed to provide insight on the often bumpy interface between what can be achieved in theory and what actually happens in practice.

Implementation research aims to do this, by understanding not only what is and isn't working, but how and why implementation is going right or wrong, and testing approaches to improve it.

Implementation research is a broad field that can address any aspect of implementation, including influencing factors, the process, or outcomes. It includes many types of studies using a wide range of approaches including qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

Implementation issues often arise as a result of contextual factors that decision-makers may not have considered and the aim of the research is to generate results that may be directly applied within the context. In addition, implementation research involves a variety of stakeholders at each stage of the research process, including decision-makers, implementers and beneficiaries. Implementation research's main focus on finding actionable solutions to real problems faced during implementation within health systems requires special attention to be paid to the context in order to ground research within the routine functioning of the health system and the involvement of stakeholders to ensure that it is locally relevant and feasible.

For more information on implementation research, please refer to:

- 1) Implementation Research in Health: A Practical Guide <http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/resources/implementationresearchguide/en/>.
- 2) UNICEF-UNDP-WORLD BANK-WHO/TDR Implementation research toolkit: Developing an Implementation Research Proposal. <http://adphealth.org/irtoolkit/proposal-development/>



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## CONCEPT NOTE SUBMISSION DETAILS

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The research team must include a Principal Investigator who is an individual directly involved in implementation of an existing QED or PSBI programme or service along with at least one researcher affiliated with an academic or research institution based in an eligible country (please see below for list of eligible countries for this research call). Individuals from high-income countries are not eligible to apply.

Collaborations between programmes or services based in countries with high child mortality and individuals and organizations in high-income countries are acceptable on the condition that no more than 25% of the total grant value can go to the individuals or organizations based in the high income country. Applications from UN agencies, including WHO and UNICEF, will not be considered. Similarly, UN country or regional offices will not be entitled to receive any funding from the research grant, though they may be listed as collaborators.

### ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

#### **QED- Quality of Care Network countries**

- Bangladesh,
- Cote d'Ivoire,
- Ethiopia,
- Ghana,
- India,
- Kenya,
- Malawi,
- Nigeria,
- Sierra Leone,
- Tanzania
- Uganda

#### **PSBI Countries**

- India
- Pakistan
- Nigeria
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Indonesia
- Bangladesh
- United Republic of Tanzania
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Niger

### Concept Note Assessment Matrix

<b>Proposal Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>
<b>Section 1: Relevance to Quality of Care and PSBI programmes learning agenda</b>	<b>30</b>
Does the research address a MNCH Quality of Care or PSBI programme issue(s)?	(5)
Does the research address one or more of the suggested themes?	(5)
Is the implementation challenge clearly described?	(10)
Does the research appropriately consider implementation outcome variables?	(10)
<b>Section 2: Appropriateness of methods for achieving the objectives of the proposal.</b>	<b>35</b>
Does the research clearly aim to answer a question concerning implementation?	(10)
Does the research clearly identify the primary audiences for the research and how they would use the research?	(5)
Is there a clear description of what is being implemented (for example, details of the practice, programme, or policy)?	(5)
Is the research conducted in a “real world” setting? If so, is the context and sample population described in sufficient detail?	(5)
Are the suggested methods appropriate to the research question?	(10)
<b>Section 3: Capacity of the team: multi-disciplinary expertise, research experience</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Section 4: Feasibility of implementing the project in the time frame</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Section 5: The appropriateness of the budget and the overall cost-effectiveness of the proposed activities.</b>	<b>10</b>