

**Request for Proposals**

**Program Monitoring and Learning (PML) Project for  
Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience (SENU) project**

**Deadline: 31 January 2025**

## **Brief Overview**

Population Council Inc. (PC) is a non-profit organization that conducts high-quality research to discover and deliver solutions. PC has been a trusted collaborator of the Government of India and esteemed global donors. With decades of expertise, the Council's India office has implemented and evaluated groundbreaking programs in key areas such as young people's health and development, sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, education and nutrition, community mobilization, HIV prevention, migration, poverty alleviation, and gender equity. Through its multi-faceted approach, the Population Council continues to shape programs and policies that improve health and well-being, striving for a future where evidence-driven solutions empower communities to thrive.

The Population Council is the Program Monitoring and Learning (PML) lead for the Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience (SENU) project of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. PC is seeking proposal from Indian organizations to conduct the program monitoring and assessment of SENU's programs in select Utkarsh districts of the country.

## **About the SENU project**

Undernutrition is a major challenge in India. In 2019–2021, an estimated 36% of children younger than five years were stunted, 19% were wasted, and 67% were anaemic. Among women of reproductive age, an estimated 57% were anaemic. Available literature from India and other countries also shows that adopting appropriate nutrition practices can mitigate the prevalence of undernutrition. It further elaborates that addressing malnutrition issue in India requires a multifaceted approach, considering the various contributing factors such as poverty, inadequate dietary intake, poor sanitation and hygiene practices, limited access to healthcare services, lack of maternal education and food insecurity.

The Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience (SENU) project, aligned with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and the Government of India's Poshan 2.0 initiative, aims to improve nutrition for women of reproductive age (15-49 years) and children (6-23 months). The project focuses on capacity building of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) workers and adolescent skill development within the frameworks of the Saksham Anganwadi and Mission Poshan 2.0 programs. It aims to improve skills and knowledge of AWWs and provide certification to ensure the sustainability of capacity-building efforts at the state level while allowing for scalability to other states and districts.

### **Capacity building of ICDS workers**

Evidence shows that undernutrition is a major challenge in India. In 2019–2021, an estimated 36% of children younger than five years were stunted, 19% were wasted, and 67% were anaemic. Among women of reproductive age, an estimated 57% were anaemic. Available literature from India and other countries also shows that adopting appropriate nutrition practices can mitigate the prevalence of undernutrition. It further elaborates that addressing malnutrition issue in India requires a multifaceted approach, considering the various contributing factors such as poverty, inadequate dietary intake, poor sanitation and hygiene practices, limited access to healthcare services, lack of maternal education and food insecurity.

Several programs and schemes have been implemented to address the undernutrition problem in India. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) is a key initiative of the MoWCD. The ICDS program focuses on addressing the nutritional and health needs of pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under six years. The program provides a package of services through Anganwadi centers, including supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring, immunization, health check-ups, and referral services.

Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) play a pivotal role in the ICDS ecosystem, serving as the frontline workers responsible for delivering quality services. Through systematic capacity building, training, and certification, AWWs can enhance their knowledge, skills, and workload management capabilities. Investing in strengthening the capacities of AWWs is essential for improving service delivery quality since many changes have occurred in the ecosystem over the past few years.

The SENU project aims to improve skills and knowledge of AWWs and provide certification to ensure the sustainability of capacity-building efforts at the state level while allowing for scalability to other states and districts.

### **Adolescent Skill Development**

It is widely acknowledged that India faces an enormous challenge concerning its low female labour force participation (FLFP). Women's wage work holds economic and emancipatory potential and is key in transforming gender norms and achieving multiple health and nutrition outcomes. However, the female labour force participation is thwarted by a mixture of patriarchal norms which restrict mobility, practical considerations of division of tasks, lack of skills training, and a shortage of jobs considered 'suitable' for girls. Girls and young women who transition to jobs and careers tend to have higher aspirations and demonstrate attributes such as self-efficacy (or confidence) and agency (or decision-making), all of which develop in the formative years of childhood and adolescence.

India has articulated its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of adolescents to have information, skills, services, safe and supportive environment through various policies and programmes. For example, the MoWCD is engaging with adolescent girls under the Saksham Anganwadi and Mission scheme of Poshan 2.0. The target beneficiaries under the scheme includes the girls in the age group of 14-18 years. The scheme aims to provide both nutritional (IFA supplementation, health check-up and referral service, nutrition and health education) and non-nutritional support (adolescent skilling) for adolescents.

Building on this evidence and existing initiatives, SENU project with the MoWCD agreed to work with the cohort of 14–18-year-old girls to build their employability skills and prepare them for earning and careers. The partnership mainly aims to motivate out-of-school girls to go to formal schooling or skill training under the non-nutritional component of the scheme.

The capacity building of ICDS workers will happen in ten Utkarsh districts across ten states: Badaun (Uttar Pradesh); Bastar (Chhattisgarh); Dhubri (Assam), Madhubani (Bihar), West Singhbhum (Jharkhand); Sheopur (Madhya Pradesh); Gadchiroli (Maharashtra); Dholpur (Rajasthan); Adilabad (Telangana), and Koppal (Karnataka).

## What are we looking for?

Population Council Inc. (PC) seeks proposals from eligible organisations to conduct mixed method surveys in three diverse districts: Garhchiroli (Maharashtra), West Singhbhum (Jharkhand), and Dhubri (Assam), ensuring a comprehensive assessment of the interventions to generate, organise and analyse data to provide insights into the efficacy of the two initiatives: (a) capacity building of ICDS workers, and (b) adolescent skill development within the frameworks of the Saksham Anganwadi and Mission Poshan 2.0 Programs.

The program assessment encompasses two core objectives:

- 1. Program's efficacy assessment:** To assess the effectiveness of the capacity building of ICDS workers, and adolescent skill development interventions in terms of reach, equity, effectiveness, behavior adoption, sustainability, and scalability.

### 1.1 The key research questions for capacity building of ICDS workers include:

- In what ways does the strengthened capacity of frontline workers contribute to the effectiveness of Anganwadi services?
- How does the certification process impact the knowledge and performance of frontline workers?
- What factors influence the success or challenges in implementing the certification process?

### 1.2 The key research questions for the adolescent skilling interventions include:

- Did the intervention contribute to improved life-skills, vocational skills, financial and digital literacy?
- Was the intervention successful in enrolling adolescent girls in vocational training courses?
- Did the intervention increase awareness about vocational and life-skills education among stakeholders?
- Which intervention strategies yielded positive results?
- Did the intervention broaden girls' aspirations and agency?
- What are the primary barriers or facilitators affecting adolescent girls' career aspirations before and after participating in skilling interventions?
- How do the skilling interventions influence the socio-economic empowerment of adolescent girls within their communities?

- 2. Process monitoring:** To understand whether and how program activities were implemented as intended, their acceptability to the target audience, and their contribution to intended outcomes.

### 2.1 The key sub-objectives for capacity building of ICDS workers include:

- Document the implementation process - mechanisms and strategies developed to strengthen the adaptive capacity of the ICDS cadre.

- Assess how the strengthened capacity of frontline workers contributes to the effectiveness of Anganwadi services in achieving their intended outcome.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening the capacity building approach of ICDS workers.

**2.2 The key sub-objectives for the adolescent skilling interventions include:**

- Document the implementation process - mechanisms and strategies developed to increase employability skills of adolescent girls.
- Assess how these skills support the adolescent girls' career aspirations.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening the adolescent girls' skilling intervention.

A mixed-methods study involving quantitative surveys with 900 respondents (ref. Table 1) across 90 Anganwadi catchment areas, qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, and systematic analysis of program data. Key work package includes:

1. Two rounds of quantitative surveys to assess the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) of ICDS workers.
2. One round of qualitative interviews with key stakeholders.
3. Periodic monitoring using program data from Implementation Partners' MIS and other secondary data sources like POSHAN Tracker.
4. One round of costing exercise for the program for scale up strategy building

The duration of the project is **January-November, 2025**.

**Table 1: Sample size required for the quantitative surveys**

<b>District, State</b>	<b>Target population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
<b>Dhubri, Assam</b>	Mothers (U6)	150
	Adolescent girls	150
<b>West Singhbhum, Jharkhand</b>	Mothers (U6)	150
	Adolescent girls	150
<b>Garhchiroli, Maharashtra</b>	Mothers (U6)	150
	Adolescent girls	150
<b>Total sample – Round 1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>Total sample – Round 2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>900</b>

### Submission details, timelines, and budget

One proposal per applicant (individual/organization) is allowed. Please submit your proposal, consisting of the following documents (also see Annexure 1), by **31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, 5 pm IST** to [info.india@popcouncil.org](mailto:info.india@popcouncil.org) :

#### 1. Technical Proposal:

- Understanding of the ToR.
- Detailed assessment framework and methodology.
- Proposed team composition with roles and responsibilities.

#### 2. Financial Proposal:

- Detailed budget, including fees, travel, and other expenses.

#### 3. CVs of Key Personnel:

- Highlighting relevant qualifications and experience.

#### 4. Work Samples:

- Two examples of similar assessments previously conducted.

Proposals can be submitted only in MS Word format. In case of queries about the process, please reach out to the email ID above. Only shortlisted organizations will be contacted.

### Technical and financial scoring criteria

Bidders will be evaluated by a panel of 3-4 scorers based on the criteria listed below. Further information on the exact items required in submission can be found in Annexure 1.

Sno.	Parameter	Max Mark	Criteria
1.	Demonstrated experience of conducting facility-based, Anganwadi-based, and community surveys in Indian states (such as DLHS, NFHS, AHS etc)	15	Bidders must demonstrate experience in at least 1 of the categories outlined. Extra points will be awarded for specific similar experiences Provision of 3 latest references, related to work similar to SOW.
2.	Proposed methodology for executing and managing the SOW	20	Methodology is tailored to the specific requirements of SOW (e.g., data quality, data management etc.), including a risk management plan, and a data quality/management plan.

3.	Organization's capacity to mobilize and retain resources needed to execute the SOW	20	Demonstrated management capacity to execute the SOW. Description of plan for recruiting experienced data collection team members. Clear monitoring and supervision plan and fieldwork plan included.
4.	Quality control mechanisms	15	Strength of plan to monitor the quality of data collection Experience and qualifications of supervisors to oversee fieldwork
5	Financial Proposal	30	A separate financial proposal needs to be submitted. The bidders' annual turnover must not be less than INR 2 - 3 Cr.

### Terms and Conditions

- a. The RFP is an invitation to offer and does not commit the PC to accept any of the quotations received or award the contract to any bidders, including but not limited to the lowest bidder. For these purposes, the PC will assess the technical and financial proposals on the basis of the criteria stated above.
- b. The PC is entitled to rely on the bidder's proposal and information provided by the bidder. In submitting a proposal and communicating with the PC, each bidder must ensure that the information it provides is true, accurate, complete, not misleading, and does not contain any intellectual property that breaches a third party's rights.
- c. Please note that while The PC is entitled to rely on the financial and technical information provided by the bidder in its proposal, the final level of effort, scope of work, budget, and pricing will exclusively be set forth in a contract agreement that may, at The PC's sole discretion, be negotiated with and awarded to, a selected bidder/vendor.
- d. Vendors must be willing to negotiate a contract with The PC in good faith and in a prompt, efficient, and cooperative manner.
- e. The successful vendor should not make any reference to the PC in any literature, promotional material, or sales presentation without prior written consent from the PC's Country Director.
- f. The PC may make any inquiries about the individual's or organization's abilities to satisfy the RFP requirements and perform the work.

- g. This RFP is not an offer to enter into an agreement with any party. Rather, it is a request to receive proposals from respondents interested in providing the services specified herein. The PC reserves the right to reject any or all quotations submitted and contract in the best interests of the PC.
- h. The PC is not responsible for any costs or damages associated with the Vendor's response, including copyright or other rights, regardless of the award or rejection of a quotation, or cancellation of this RFP.
- i. Proposal responses are intended only for internal review by the authorizing organization (The PC) and not for outside distribution. The information provided herein by the Population Council, or reproduced information given by the Population Council, shall be and should be treated as confidential.



**Annexure 1: Submission checklist**

Documents that are to be submitted with a complete proposal.

S No	Document Type	Format
1	Company registration	As provided by the Registration of Societies Act 1860, a Public Trust registered under the Indian Trust Act 1982, or a corporation registered under Section 8 Companies Act.
2	Tax filing	Tax registration and official ITR filing for last 3 years ITR filing for year 2019-2020, 2021-2022, 2022-23 to be attached to the technical proposal
3	Certificate of incorporation, PAN No. and GST Details	Copies of all registrations
4	Agency's work	A brief overview of the agency, highlighting key competencies and services rendered. This should include a description of previous experience of similar work in school, Anganwadi center, or community level surveys in the states the agency is drafting a proposal for. For listing previous experience, the vendor should use a tabular format and include project name and duration, sector, project description, data collection services provided and funder.
5	Team members' Curriculum Vitae (CV)	Detailed CVs of team members that will be assigned to the project, with specific work experience and relevant background.
6	Document with two recent references	Reference letters on completion of 2 last projects. Please include name, contact information, company, and nature of the relationship
7	Financial Proposal	Budget for completing the Total Study Requirement
8	Technical Proposal	As outlined in detail below.
9	Logistical plan for data collection	As outlined below, contains information on the number of teams and team members and how they will travel to enumeration areas against a daily data collection schedule along with management/coordination information

**The technical proposal should include:**

**Section A: Understanding of the PML objectives and design (not more than 2 pages).**

Describe the PML objective and work plan. Please remark on any design changes that the research agency would make based on its expertise in conducting research and experience in the field.

**Section B: Operational approach (not more than 4-5 pages)**

A. The agency is required to develop the data collection tools, program them into the online software, and conduct data analysis.

B. Preparation: Describe the preparation activities the agency will undertake. Include hiring quality data collectors, developing field manuals, and other field management tools.

C. Understanding of local context: Describe any contextual considerations that must be made to effectively carry the surveys to the target respondents. Additionally, describe the agency's approach to managing these issues. Considerations may include but are not limited to the language of the survey, timing of data collection activities, and selection criteria for interviewers.

D. Staffing and team composition: Describe the staff that will be working on this project, the recruitment method for hiring staff, the number of staff needed to complete the project, roles, and relevant experience, and whether they will be working on this project full-time or part-time.

E. Staffing compensation: Provide proposed field management and interviewer compensation figures (weekly rates you will pay staff in INR).

F. Equipment: Data will be collected electronically using tablets. The agency will be required to provide tablets for all data collectors. Describe the equipment that the agency would be able to provide.

G. Training: Describe training programs that will take place for data collection.

H. Data collection: Describe the logistical plan for data collection. Include how teams will travel to and around enumeration areas, how many teams and team members will be deployed, how teams will be managed and coordinated and how data will be uploaded on a daily basis.

I. Data management and confidentiality: Describe how the agency will ensure compliance with any ethical guidelines, including how data will be kept confidential and secure during field work.

J. Data quality: Describe how the agency will ensure quality data, including monitoring of interview and interviewer quality and planned data checking and quality assurance processes planned.

## **Annexure 2: Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

### **Layers of monitoring and supervision by the select agency**

The selected agency must implement at least a two-tier monitoring and supervision mechanism to maintain data quality. Supervisors will ensure data quality through their supervision and monitoring efforts and provide support whenever needed. Supervisors/Coordinators will coordinate the field team and oversee the data collection process.

### **Roles and responsibilities of agencies to ensure the data quality**

The select agency will be overall responsible for field monitoring and data quality assurance. The PC team will oversee the field survey to ensure data quality. A protocol will be established and implemented to minimize potential non-sampling errors. The feedback provided by PC must be incorporated.

### **The agency must address any deviations or sub-standard data in accordance with the PC's guidance. This will include:**

- a) Agency would be responsible for loss, damage, or manipulation of data or poor quality of data; fresh data will be re-collected by the agency without any additional cost from the PC.
- b) Through checking of the CAPI tools for validity and logical checks along with the translations.
- c) Ensuring the data collectors and the project team meet the minimum required criteria mentioned in the RFP.
- d) Carry out at least 5% in-person backcheck and share the variance reports on a daily basis; with 10% of total back checks taking place in the first 2 weeks of data collection.
- e) At the end of the data collection, share a detailed report on the quality assurance mechanism followed and the gaps identified during the process.
- f) The project lead should vet the final data submission for accuracy and quality check.

### **Review meetings by PC**

PC staff and consultants will conduct periodic feedback meetings with the data collection team. During these meetings, the PC team will discuss, and present key findings related to the progress of the survey and any data quality issues.

### **To ensure data quality, the following analyses will be performed and discussed with the data collection team:**

- Average time spent in the field each day.
- Target versus achievement of the required sample
- Consistency in recording skip patterns.
- Average time taken to complete an interview.