

Request for Applications (RFA)

Serve as Local Research Partner for Mid-Project Qualitative Evaluation of the Rwanda Gikuriro Kuri Bose (GKB) - Inclusive Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (INECD) Project

Introduction

Data for Impact (D4I) is a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). D4I supports countries to realize the power of data as actionable evidence that can improve programs, policies, and—ultimately—health outcomes. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), through the Carolina Population Center (CPC), leads D4I in partnership with Palladium, ICF, John Snow, Inc. (JSI), and Tulane University.

D4I seeks a Rwandan research organization to serve as our partner for a mid-project qualitative evaluation of the USAID-funded Rwanda Gikuriro Kuri Bose – Inclusive Nutrition and Early Childhood Development project. The successful applicant will demonstrate superior technical, logistical, and organizational capacity needed to conduct the evaluation, deep understanding of the local context, and a desire to support sustainable health and nutrition outcomes for Rwandan families through helping to generate and disseminate evidence for program improvement. If a successful applicant is selected, they will be contracted through UNC-CH. Organizations that have not previously worked on USAID-funded activities and those led by women or individuals from other historically disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

GKB-INECD

GKB promotes nurturing and responsive care practices, especially in the areas of health, functioning, nutrition, and early childhood development (ECD) for caregivers and children in Rwanda. Specifically, the activity aims to improve health and nutrition outcomes among women of reproductive age and adolescents, and improve infant and young child feeding practices. It also aims to address child development gaps and significant unmet physical rehabilitation and assistive technology (rehab/AT) needs as well as social inclusion needs for infants and children. The activity focuses on community-level service delivery, community-health facility linkages and district level capacity development, including access to programs and services for children and adults with disabilities, in line with Government of Rwanda priorities.

Qualitative Evaluation

Data for Impact (D4I) will conduct a qualitative midterm evaluation of GKB-INECD to help understand what has worked, what has been challenging, and why, to enable USAID, and its multiple partners (including GKB-INECD implementers, the Ministry of Health, and social cluster ministries) to use the findings for adaptive programming and to fine tune current investments and prioritize future investments. D4I will focus on examining what facility- and community-based partners have learned through project-supported trainings and activities, how they understand their role and who they work with and how, and how they have operationalized their roles. We will also focus on determining what caregivers are learning through GKB activities about nutrition, ECD, rehabilitation, etc., as well as understanding, from a caregiver perspective, what their journeys have been from assessment/ identification of disability or other rehabilitation needs to referral and access to services, and providing care.



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Data Collection

The qualitative midterm evaluation will include case studies of four GKB-INECD districts, one from each cluster (eastern, central, western, southern). These districts will be purposively selected in consultation with USAID, GKB-INECD implementing partners, and the local research partner. Similarly, study participants will be purposively selected in collaboration with GKB-INECD and the local research partner.

In addition to focus group discussions (FGDs) with community-based health workers and volunteers and caregivers of children aged 0-59 months, in depth interviews (IDIs) will be conducted with facility based healthcare providers and with caregivers of children with developmental delays and/or rehab/AT needs in each study district.

A Most Significant Change (MSC) workshop (12-16 participants, 2 days total) will be held in each district with community- and facility-based health workers, along with GKB and district health staff. MSC is a participatory method in which multiple stakeholders tell and document stories of significant change related to interventions. The stakeholders will be asked to share stories of change and then to engage in group discussions about the stories in order to articulate perceived outcomes. They will discuss the value of these reported changes, and which they think is most significant of all. The MSC method encourages data analysis by participants because they must explain why they think one change is more important than another. We anticipate soliciting stories of change related to selected topic categories, such as provision of nutrition and ECD services and identifying, referring or providing services for children with development delays or rehab/AT needs.

In addition, we will use Photovoice with the caregivers of children with developmental delays and/or rehab/AT needs to document their journey accessing services. Photovoice involves the use of photographs to document and express experiences. Photovoice participants will have an introductory session to explain the purpose of the activity, participate in an initial in depth interview (IDI), and be given a disposable digital camera to document their experiences accessing services and caring for children. After approximately one week, the photos will be downloaded and printed and during a FGD (one per district), participants will use the photographs to describe their experiences accessing services, focusing on both positive and challenging aspects of their experiences.

There will be a total of 24 FGDs, 36 in-depth interviews, 16 photovoice participants, and four MSC workshops as described in the table below.

Method	Participants	Districts	Number per district	Total
Focus group discussions	Community based health workers and volunteers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECD caregivers and Parents Lumiere • Social Economic and Development Officers (SEDOs) • Community based rehabilitation (CBR) volunteers • Field agents 	4	4	16
	Caregivers/families	4	2	8
In-depth interviews	Health care providers – District hospital	4	2	8
	Health care providers – Health center	4	3	12
	Caregivers of children with developmental delays and/or disabilities	4	4	16

Photovoice participants	Caregivers of children with developmental delays and/or disabilities (same people who participate in the IDIs above)	4	4	16
MSC workshops	Health care providers and community-based volunteers, GBK district staff, district-level government staff	4	1	4

Activities and Responsibilities for the Local Research Partner

The local research partner will work in close collaboration with D4I to carry out the activities detailed below.

Rwanda Ethics Approval

The local research partner will obtain approval from the Rwanda National Ethics Committee and other relevant authorities (if applicable). D4I will provide the study protocol and tools and assist with the ethics application as needed.

Recruitment of Enumerators

The local research partner will recruit a sufficient number of qualified enumerators and interviewers to implement data collection in a three- to four-week period.

Training of Enumerators/Interviewers and Pre-Test of Data Collection Tools

The local research partner will lead the training of the data collection team with support from D4I. A 10-day training workshop is anticipated. Topics covered will include an introduction to the evaluation, protection of human subjects, interviewing and facilitation techniques, how to facilitate an MSC workshop, how to implement Photovoice, a questions-by-questions review of the data collection tools in English and Kinyarwanda, extensive role playing and practice, and a two-day pilot of the data collection tools.

Finalization of Data Collection Tools

The local research partner will participate in the development of data collection tools including but not limited to finalization following the pilot exercise at the end of data collector training.

Liaise with Local Authorities

The local research partner will be responsible for conducting all necessary protocol visits with local authorities at all study locations prior to the start of data collection.

Data Collection/Data Quality

The local research partner will implement data collection over a three- to four-week period as described above. The team supervisor will ensure data quality by closely supervising members of the data collection team and reviewing their work for accuracy and completeness. All FGDs and IDIs will be audio recorded and translated and transcribed directly into English

Dissemination of Results

The local research partner will work closely with DFI to analyze the data and develop the draft and final study reports. The local research partner should plan for a half-day results dissemination meeting for approximately 40 persons, to be held in Kigali.

Deliverables

- Local ethics approval
- Finalized data collection tools and consent forms, including translation into Kinyarwanda or other appropriate local language

- Submission of the FGD and IDI English transcripts (including Photovoice IDIs and FGDs) along with audio recordings
- Submission of completed templates used in MSC workshops (in Word)
- Submission of Photovoice photos and signed consent to use photos by each Photovoice participant
- Sections of data analysis and the draft report as assigned to the local research partner
- Organization of and participation in the national dissemination meeting
- Provision of secure storage of all hard copy documents (e.g., consent forms)

Timeline

D4I has already begun preliminary preparations for the study. The successful applicant should plan to start activities in January/February 2024. The expected timeline for study benchmarks is presented below:

- Rwanda ethics approval: January/February 2024
- Training of data collection team and data collection: February/March 2024
- Draft evaluation report: July 2024
- Final study report and dissemination meeting: August/September 2024

Application Requirements

The successful applicant will be required to possess the following skills and competencies:

- Experience with the implementation of qualitative data collection (FGDs and IDIs). Experience with MSC and Photovoice is not required (D4I will train the team on these methods).
- Experience translating and transcribing English FGD and IDI transcripts in a timely manner.
- Experience with qualitative data analysis, including coding and identification of themes (experience with qualitative software preferred);
- Excellent project management and people management skills and the ability to deliver within timeframes as reflected in the work plan;
- Excellent writing skills in English.

Preference will be given to local entities as defined by USAID (see <https://www.usaid.gov/np/np-key-definitions>). Applicants to this RFA need not demonstrate extensive experience with all aspects of the qualitative research process; D4I and the selected local partner will engage in capacity action planning (through discussions, guided assessments, etc.) to identify one or more priority technical areas for capacity strengthening in support of the local organization's goals. Capacity strengthening plans, co-developed by D4I and the local partner, may include supplemental training, learning-by-doing, or other integrated approaches designed to improve the partner's performance in the context of the local system, in areas where local partners have been historically underutilized in partnerships with international actors (data analysis, report writing, dissemination, etc.).

Organizations wishing to serve as D4I's local research partner for the Rwanda GKB-INECD study should submit:

A **Cover Letter** that clearly identifies the application is responding to the "Rwanda GKB-INECD RFA" and stating the applicant organization's name, address, phone numbers, URL, and main email address. There should be a contact person listed for any purpose related to this RFA.

A **Technical Proposal** that describes in detail the approach to addressing the technical and logistical requirements to conduct the evaluation. The approach should describe a recruitment plan for enumerators

(qualifications, where recruited from, size of overall team, number of team members, etc.); training topics for enumerator training; and a discussion of data collection logistics and data quality measures.

The technical proposal should include a **detailed timeline** that lays out all the project activities and tasks with projected completion dates for each activity and task.

The technical proposal should be no more than 10 pages, 1.5 spaced with 1 inch margins and 11 point Times New Roman font.

An **Organizational Description and Experience Statement**. The applicant should provide a brief description of the overall governance structure of their organization. The applicant should describe the number and roles/responsibilities of the staff that will implement the study.

The applicant should name the key technical and administrative/financial personnel that will be involved in the study. It should name a Principal Investigator and a Chief Administrative/Financial Officer who will serve as the main technical and financial liaison persons with D4I (this can be the same person). CVs of key staff should be included in the application.

The applicant should also describe their organization's past experience successfully organizing and conducting qualitative research in Rwanda. The applicant should provide a description of past projects (up to 3, with no more than 1 page description per project; these pages will not count to overall length of the application). The demonstrated capacity to do high quality work will be a crucial consideration.

The organizational description should be no more than 3 pages, 1.5 spaced with 1 inch margins and 11 Times New Roman point font, exclusive of CVs and past project descriptions.

A **Description of Financial/Accounting Structures and Practices**. The applicant should submit, on letterhead, a statement of how the applicant calculates any indirect costs (if charged in the budget).

A **Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative** that breaks down costing information by line item. It should include, but is not limited to the following cost categories:

Personnel cost: List name and/or position title, annual base salary or daily rate, percent of effort or number of workdays for each category of staff (e.g., field supervisor, enumerator, etc.). Please provide justification and a description of responsibilities for each category of staff.

Training: Include expenses for training such as lunch and tea breaks, training materials, venue, and per diem for trainees.

Travel/Transport: List travel/transport expenses, such as vehicle rental, driver per diem, etc., for pilot of study tools and data collection.

Other Direct Costs: Indicate cost for printing of data collection tools and consent forms; cost of dissemination meeting; and any other direct costs. Please also budget for 16 basic digital cameras and printing of up to 20 color photos per Photovoice participant. (Digital cameras maybe provided by D4I if local purchase proves overly expensive.)

Budgets should be supplied in an Excel spreadsheet. A detailed **budget narrative** in a Word document is also required.

Deadline

Proposals must be submitted electronically to measure_rfp@unc.edu by 8:00 am on U.S. Eastern Daylight Savings Time on December 13, 2023. The submission should include all materials related to the application.

Questions

Questions will be accepted via email at measure_rfp@unc.edu until 8:00 am U.S. Eastern Standard Time on November 27, 2023. A list of all questions and answers will be posted by 5 pm on December 1, 2023 at <https://www.data4impactproject.org/about-us/work-with-us/>.

Proposal Review and Notification of Intent to Enter into a Sub-Agreement

Following receipt of applications, D4I will review the received materials and may conduct a second round review of “best and final” applicants. If this occurs, D4I will follow-up with specific questions and may request additional information from the “best and final” applicants. Applications will be reviewed in terms of their technical soundness, organization past experience, quality of key staff, and financial competitiveness.