

Society for Health Education

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Hiring a National Research Consultant to Conduct a Study on Fertility, Contraceptive Use, and Reproductive Health Morbidities in the Greater Malé Region

Introduction

The Society for Health Education (SHE) is a national non-governmental organization in the Maldives dedicated to promoting health and well-being through an integrated and holistic approach. The thematic areas of SHE are Sexual Reproductive Health, Thalassemia Laboratory and Diagnostic Services, Counselling and Psychosocial Services, and Health promotion.

SHE strives to improve the quality of life of the Maldivian people by promoting equitable access to quality health services, strengthening national capacity, and raising awareness on health and social issues through evidence-based programmes and partnerships.

1. Background

Improving sexual and reproductive health remains a national priority in the Maldives. The National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy and Action Plan (2020–2025) identifies infertility and reproductive health as important areas requiring strengthened evidence to inform policy and service delivery. While reproductive health services have expanded over the years, limited national data exists on the factors influencing fertility trends, contraceptive uptake, infertility, and reproductive health conditions among women of reproductive age.

Reproductive health morbidities, including Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS), endometriosis and other relevant conditions, can affect fertility, reproductive outcomes and overall well-being. However, there is limited national evidence on the burden and impact of these conditions, as well as experiences of accessing appropriate diagnosis, treatment and care.

Recent trends in fertility and contraceptive use highlight important gaps in understanding the factors influencing reproductive decision-making, fertility intentions, contraceptive choices, and access to quality family planning services. The total fertility rate in the Maldives declined to 1.7 children per woman by 2022, below replacement level, highlighting the need for further research into the factors influencing fertility preferences and family decisions (UNFPA Maldives, 2026). The 2016–17 Maldives Demographic

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and Health Survey reported that 31% of currently married women had an unmet need for family planning, while only 37% had their demand for family planning satisfied (Ministry of Health, 2018).

To address these evidence gaps, SHE will undertake a mixed-methods study focusing on the Greater Malé region to explore factors influencing fertility, contraceptive uptake, infertility and reproductive health morbidities. The study will also assess the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of relevant reproductive health services within the study area. Available national-level evidence will be reviewed to provide broader context to the study findings.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The overall objective of this consultancy is to design and lead a mixed-methods study to generate evidence on fertility, contraceptive use, infertility and reproductive health morbidities in the Greater Malé region, and to provide practical recommendations to strengthen sexual and reproductive health policies, programs and service delivery in the Maldives.

Specific objectives:

- Examine fertility trends, fertility intentions and factors influencing reproductive decision-making.
- Assess contraceptive knowledge, access, choice, quality and uptake, including barriers to contraceptive use and unmet need among women of reproductive age and their partners.
- Assess the burden and lived experiences of reproductive health morbidities, including PMOS, endometriosis and other relevant conditions, and their impact on fertility and reproductive outcomes.
- Examine social, economic, gender and service-related factors influencing fertility, contraceptive use and reproductive health outcomes, including costs, social norms and male engagement.
- Assess the availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and readiness of relevant reproductive health services across the public and private sectors, including referral pathways and contraceptive commodity availability.
- Develop evidence-based recommendations to strengthen policies, programmes and services relating to fertility, contraception, infertility and reproductive health morbidities.

3. Scope of Work

The consultant will be responsible for the overall design, implementation and completion of the study in accordance with the agreed objectives, timeframe and ethical requirements. The scope of work will include:



- Conduct a desk review of relevant national policies, strategies, surveys, administrative data, research and other available evidence relating to fertility, contraceptive use, infertility and reproductive health morbidities to inform the study design and interpretation of findings.
- Develop an appropriate research design, including the sampling approach, data collection methods and tools, and analysis plan, aligned with the study objectives.
- Prepare and submit the required documentation and obtain ethical clearance for the study prior to commencement of primary data collection.
- Conduct data collection in accordance with the approved study protocol, methodology and ethical requirements.
- Ensure appropriate measures for data quality, informed consent, confidentiality, safeguarding and data protection throughout the research process.
- Coordinate with SHE and relevant stakeholders as required to facilitate implementation of the study.
- Analyze and consolidate the study findings and develop practical, evidence-based recommendations in line with the study objectives.
- Present the findings for stakeholder validation and incorporate relevant feedback in finalizing the study.

4. Key Deliverables

The consultant will be expected to deliver the following:

- Inception report and study protocol, including the proposed methodology, sampling approach, data collection methods, analysis plan and implementation timeline.
- Final data collection tools and supporting research materials, based on the approved study methodology.
- Ethical clearance for the study, including the approved protocol and relevant supporting documentation.
- Cleaned and validated study dataset(s) and relevant qualitative data and analysis outputs, as applicable.
- Draft research report presenting the study methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Presentation of preliminary findings for stakeholder validation, including incorporation of relevant feedback into the final study.
- Final research report, incorporating feedback from SHE and the stakeholder validation process.
- Executive summary and policy brief presenting the key findings and recommendations.

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- Presentation of the final study findings to SHE and relevant stakeholders.
- Complete study documentation and research materials in agreed formats.

5. Qualifications and Experience

The consultant should have:

- A Bachelor's degree in a relevant field, with demonstrated experience in research.
- A minimum of three (3) years of relevant research experience.
- Demonstrated experience in designing and conducting quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods research.
- Experience in undertaking research assignments of a similar nature; experience in health, sexual and reproductive health or related areas would be an advantage.
- Experience in data analysis and preparation of research reports.
- Good written and verbal communication skills.
- Knowledge of the Maldivian context would be an advantage.

6. Submission Requirements

Interested applicants should submit the following:

- A technical proposal outlining the applicant's understanding of the assignment, proposed approach and methodology, work plan and timeline.
- A financial proposal providing a detailed breakdown of the consultancy fee and other costs associated with the assignment.
- An updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) highlighting relevant qualifications, research experience and similar assignments undertaken.
- Copies of relevant academic and professional certificates.
- Evidence of relevant previous research or consultancy work, such as research reports, publications or similar outputs, where available.
- Contact details of at least two professional references from previous relevant assignments.

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7. Reporting

The consultant will report directly to the Director Program and will work closely with the assigned program team throughout the assignment.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant knowledge and technical expertise – **40%**
- Technical approach and methodology – **30%**
- Qualifications and experience of the consultant – **15%**
- Financial proposal – **15%**

9. Duration of the Assignment

The consultancy is expected to be completed within **90** working days, after the contract is signed, and according to the agreed work plan.

10. Payment Schedule

Payment will be made upon satisfactory completion of the agreed deliverables as follows:

- **30%** upon approval of the inception report and study protocol, methodology, sampling framework, and data collection tools.
- **70%** upon submission and approval of the final research report, executive summary, policy brief, presentation, cleaned datasets, and supporting study documentation.

11. Intellectual Property Clause:

All materials, reports, presentations, research tools, datasets, analysis outputs, and other deliverables developed under this consultancy shall become the property of the Society for Health Education (SHE). The consultant shall not reproduce, distribute, or use the materials without prior written approval from SHE.

12. Safeguarding and Ethical Considerations:

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The consultant will be required to comply with SHE's safeguarding, child protection, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), confidentiality, and ethical standards throughout the assignment.

13. Application Deadline

Interested candidates should submit their applications by **15th October 2026** to:

Society for Health Education (SHE)

M. Kulunuvehi
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Malé, Maldives

Email: hr@she.org.mv

SHE is committed to the safety and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults and this role may involve contact with these groups. Our recruitment and selection procedures reflect our commitment to the safety and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults in our programs. SHE is committed to equal opportunities, cultural diversity and encourages women, young people and people with disability to apply.