

# Statement of Work (SOW) for Cost of the Diet (CotD) Formative Research

## Save the Children

Date

7/24/19

Services Performed By:

Services Performed For:

Save the Children

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## Background

Save the Children is a sub-partner to ACDI/VOCA on a 5-year USAID-funded activity called ViMPlus (Victory Against Malnutrition Plus), which is a follow-on intervention to the 7-year ViM Project implemented under the same consortium. The overall goal is to combat extreme poverty and chronic malnutrition in the Centre-Nord Region of Burkina Faso building on the proven success of the Victory Against Malnutrition (ViM) project. Victory Against Malnutrition Plus (ViMPlus) will achieve sustainable food and nutrition security for households thriving in resilient community systems in Centre-Nord through the scaling of ViM best practices plus targeted innovations by our consortium: ACDI/VOCA, Save the Children, Tufts University and proven local partners. More than just a geographic expansion and strengthening of ViM's market systems approach to livelihoods, ViMPlus adds interventions with a deliberate focus on sustainability, governance, disaster risk management, and gender and youth integration and includes robust collaborating, learning and adapting feedback loops.

To address information gaps and complement planned formative research, ViMPlus will use the Cost of the Diet (CotD) software and method to estimate the amount, combination and cost of local foods that are needed to provide individuals or families with their average needs for energy and their recommended intakes of protein, fat and micronutrients in the program implementation areas. This information will inform program design and social and behavior change approaches.

## Research Justification

According to ViM's final evaluation, there have been large and statistically significant improvements in mother and child health and nutrition, including for stunting, underweight, quality of health services, and sanitation/hygiene. At the same time, the endline revealed only marginal differences in results between program beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in some key indicators such as prevalence of 6-23 months children receiving a minimum acceptable diet (MAD) and improved Women's Dietary Diversity Score (WDDS) for Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW). Similarly, the project did not move the needle on certain health behaviors. It often focused on measuring knowledge rather than uptake of certain practices, indicating potential gaps in project design and implementation that ViMPlus should account for and address.

Focus group discussions (FDGs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) pointed to issues with access to diversified foods. In cases where consumption of varied or vitamin-A rich foods was limited, respondents noted that the means to consume such foods was also limited. KIIs with Mother Leaders revealed that in

instances where minimum acceptable diet (MAD) practices were not being implemented, individuals lacked the means to purchase vitamin-A rich foods. These results are reflected in the minimal uptake of MAD, which only increased from 4.9% to 8.9%. There was no significant difference between ViM beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In addition, Women's Dietary Diversity Score (WDDS) for Pregnant and Lactating Women increased only marginally, from 2.9 food group at baseline to 3.3 at endline, and ViM beneficiary women only had a slightly higher but not statistically significant WDDS at 3.3 compared to 3.2 for non-beneficiary women.

These results point to economic constraints affecting access to a nutritious and diversified diet and adoption of some key priority practices, and it is important for ViMPlus to understand how to best address these. Also, we do not have information on households' cost of a nutritious diet, which impedes our ability to make feasible recommendations or do-able actions in our SBC approaches. The CotD will also inform vouchers or cash transfers amount if the program selects those transfer mechanisms. In this context, the CotD method is particularly relevant. Unfortunately, no CotD has been conducted in the livelihood zone corresponding the program's zone of intervention.

## Key Research Objectives

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The primary objectives of this work are to:

- Estimate the minimum cost of a diet for specified households of multiple individuals;
- Identify seasonal gaps in nutrient intake;
- Identify inexpensive sources of nutrient rich foods;
- Estimate the affordability of the diet according to wealth to assess if poverty prevents households obtaining a varied, nutritious diet;
- Develop models of the impact of potential interventions that might enable households to meet their nutrient requirements.
- Use the software to analyse the cost and the nutrient content of food recipes for complementary feeding or for maternal nutrition

## Research Methods

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The Cost of the Diet is an innovative method and software developed by Save the Children UK to estimate the amount and combination of local foods that are needed to provide a typical family with a diet that meets their average needs for energy and their recommended intakes of protein, fat and micronutrients. The method was developed as a response to research undertaken by Save the Children, which demonstrated that the impact of traditional nutrition education program has been limited because of the economic constraints facing many households in low-income countries.

As part of a CotD, market surveys are used to compile lists of available foods, data on prices and seasonal availability in a particular livelihood zone. Interviews and focus group discussions with various members of the community are held to understand typical dietary habits. The software is used to calculate the cost of a nutritious diet for multiple seasons in one year.

The results of the CotD will complement other formative research conducted by ViMPlus during the Refine period and help inform the program's Social Behavior Change Strategy, and interventions in the Health and Nutrition and Livelihoods components but also identify very specific opportunities for integrations between those components. During the refine period, ViMPlus will review data collection tools of different studies to make sure the same data isn't collected twice (possible overlap with the Markets study for example).

### ***Research Questions***

The formative research will focus on the following key lines of inquiry:

- What is the estimated minimum cost of a locally specified diet for individuals and households of multiple individuals?
- What are the seasonal variations in prices when costing a diet?
- What are the food groups, which contribute the most to the cost of the diet?
- What nutrients requirements are hard to meet?
- What are some inexpensive, nutrient-rich food sources?
- What is the cost and nutrient content of food recipes for complementary feeding or maternal nutrition?

### ***Data Collection Methods***

CotD assessments include secondary data collection, market surveys, household interviews, and focus group discussions. Data from household economic survey (HEA) of the targeted livelihood zone will be used to support the design and the analysis of the study data. Six to eight market places will be selected according to the cost of the diet guidelines. Primary data on foods price and weight will be collected. Traders will also be interviewed on seasonal variation of food prices and availability. Four villages will be randomly selected for the household interview and focus group discussion. The food frequency questionnaire will be administered to eight households in order to determine the frequency of foods consumed from the markets each week by the household

Focus group discussion will be conducted for different wealth groups in order to capture any relevant information on food habits and preparation, food taboos for specific vulnerable groups (PLW, U2 children) or any foods produced at household level including wild foods.

#### *Prior to field visit*

- Review of relevant data and reports from the assessment areas (livelihood zones, wealth ranking, household composition and income data)
- Support the team in organizing the training logistics and selecting villages and markets for data collection
- Develop training and field work schedule

#### *In-country*

- Undertake in-country joint training of a core team from the Burkina Faso and Niger teams on the cost of the diet data collection methods (including development of food list, market choice, pilot market survey)
- Supervise the field teams in Niger and Burkina Faso during data collection (including checking data quality). Please note that supervision might need to be done remotely for the Burkina Faso project due to the security situation.

- Conduct an introductory session on the CotD and present the initial findings of the assessment to the SC staff and partner agencies in Burkina Faso and Niger. Any comments of the results will be incorporated into the final analysis
- From the results of the retrospective CotD assessment set up seasonal data collection by training the national nutrition advisors in how to collect ‘real-time’ seasonal data and developing a food list based on the main foods eaten by households and those chosen by the software.

## Preliminary Results Application Plan

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The results of this study and other studies conducted during the Refine year will inform the development of a scalable cross-cutting Social and Behavior Change (SBC) implementation strategy for ViMPlus. The study will provide valuable information to help ViMPlus design its activities, such as:

- Periods when HHs may be vulnerable to high food prices, which affect their ability to afford a nutritious diet, which will inform when interventions may have the greatest impact.
- Which nutrients are the hardest to obtain from locally available foods, and what foods are the least expensive sources of energy and nutrient. This will inform the design of interventions aimed at improving the nutrient quality of the diet.
- An appropriate cash transfer or voucher amount (and possible need for top up amounts to account for seasonality), if the results of the CotD are compared with income and expenditure data generated by the latest Household Economy Analysis for the livelihood zone<sup>1</sup>. This can also be used to identify which wealth groups are most at risk of insufficient economic access to a nutritious diet and help ensure appropriate targeting.
- What potential interventions will have greatest impact on improving the quality and affordability of the diet, which is modelled using the software.

## Team Composition / Team Lead Competencies

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The research will be led by an external consultant and backstopped by SCUS focal points (SBC Advisor, Nutrition/SBC Lead, Nutrition Lead) in collaboration with ViMPlus SBC, Health and Nutrition Leads and Breakthrough Action. The team will be assisted by ViMPlus field agents (Health and Nutrition, WASH and Village Agents) who will act as data collectors. Leading a CotD assessment and analyzing the results is complex and requires expertise and previous training.

The research consultant must have:

- 1-2 years’ experience in conducting CotD assessments and training of field staff
- Experience conducting nutrition or relevant field research in Burkina Faso, Niger or similar country contexts in the region;
- Demonstrated capacity based on previous related work in the form of published materials, tools, reports, etc.
- Qualified personnel, facilities and tools to carry out the research;
- Excellent written and spoken French and English
- Proficiency in Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint

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<sup>1</sup> The latest HEA in the relevant program livelihood zone was conducted in 2012. Though updated data would be ideal, it is still possible to use 2012 date to conduct additional analysis.

**Team Leaders:**

Trained CotD External research consultant  
SBC Advisor, Save the Children US  
SBC/Nutrition Senior Specialist, Save the Children US  
ViMPlus SBC Lead  
ViMPlus Health and Nutrition Manager

## Operations and Deliverables

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**Number of Staff Required:** One advisor to lead training, analysis and report writing; four to-six data collectors from the target area; one country administrator to manage logistics.

**Time:** Estimated total time required is six weeks.

**Cost of Assessment:** This will vary according to the scope/number of villages surveyed but Save the Children estimates a total cost of \$20,000.

**Training:** The individual who leads the CotD assessment should be previously trained and experienced. Training of data collectors should take at least 2-3 days. An example training schedule is provided in the CotD guidelines.

**Geographic Targeting:** A CotD assessment can be conducted in any location within the program's zone of intervention but it is important to ensure that assessments are conducted in regions where price and availability of food and income are reasonably homogenous. A simple approach is to confine the CotD assessment to a livelihood zone. Depending on the objectives of the study, the interviews and focus group discussions should be conducted in a minimum of four villages.

The following deliverables will be due within and agreed timeline that is open to negotiation based on the recommendations and expertise of the bidder.

***Approximate Deliverables for external consultant and timeline:***

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Estimated Level Of Effort</b>
Inception Report including the initial literature review, methodology and a detailed workplan for completing the deliverables.	7-10 days
Initial review of relevant data and reports from the assessment areas (livelihood zones, wealth ranking, household composition and income data, nutrition and food security situational analysis)	
Protocol and data collection tools	3-5 days
Finalized protocol and data collection tools that incorporate Save the Children's feedback	2 days

Provide input to in country team on training logistics and support with selecting villages and markets for data collection	3-4 days
Develop training and field work schedule	2 days
Undertake in-country training of a core team on the cost of the diet data collection methods (including development of food list, market choice, pilot market survey)	3-4 days
CotD data collected and submit first draft of the report	10-15 days
Conduct an introductory session on the CotD and present the initial findings of the assessment to the SC staff and partner agencies who are present in Centre Nord region.	1 day
Final report submission	3-4 days
From the results of the retrospective CotD assessment set up seasonal data collection by training the national nutrition advisor in how to collect 'real-time' seasonal data and developing a food list based on the main foods eaten by households and those chosen by the software.	2-3 days

***Approximate Deliverables for ViMPlus team timeline:***

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Estimated Level Of Effort</b>
Facilitate government and community introductions as needed	2-3 days
Review and approval of final methodology	2-3 days
Review reports and provide feedback to researcher in final reports and regular and more informal updates	5 days
Participate in trainings of researcher enumerators, and data collection	5-10 days

## Period of Performance / Timeline

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- Date on which research and consultancy services will commence and end on an agreed upon date, in consultation with USAID and Save the Children. We estimate the study should commence at the end of August.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Partners

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Please see table above

## Estimated Budget and LOE

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The final budget and LOE will be determined with the hired consultant.