



Terms of reference (TOR) to hire an institute to develop a report “Responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective: implications of international experiences for China”

I. Background

In response to the persistent low fertility in China, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and State Council of China released “The Decision for Improving Fertility Policies to Promote A Long-term Balanced Population Development” (hereinafter referred to as the “Decision”) on June 26 2021. The Decision stipulates that, in order to promote a long-term balanced population development, China will improve its fertility policies, allow couples to have three children and remove restrictive measures such as social compensation fee, abolish related punishment stipulations, and roll out active and supportive fertility measures. The Decision also requests provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities) to ensure the coherence of policies and organize its implementation in a legal manner on the basis of overall considerations of their local population development trend, the current situation and policy risks. On August 20 2021, the 30th Session of the 13th National People’s Congress Standing Committee voted to approve revising the law on population and family planning, endorsing revisions centering around the above policy change. Along with the release of the Decision, the ministries and local governments have started to introduce comprehensive supportive policy and programme measures to implement the above policy.

The Outcome 4 “Population Dynamics” under the UNFPA/China CP9 (2021-2025) aims to, based on the analysis of both national and international experiences, provide quality, gender-responsive policy and programmatic advice to better support the Government to adopt a rights-based and life-cycle approach in its response to low fertility and aging. In 2021, CPDRC, IPRPKU and UNFPA China jointly conducted research on Fertility Supportive Policies from a Life-cycle Perspective, which found that work/life conflicts faced by women and couples constitute an important part of the causes of low fertility in China. Out of the four categories of supportive policies and programmes measures, so far the released/currently implemented ones in China focus on leave allowances, economic subsidies and supportive services while policies and programme measures to improve gender equality and support work/life balance are relatively limited. This conclusion is also supported by other studies. For example, a joint ILO/UN Women study on Family Care Work in China found that women’s unpaid care work hours and total working hours, which involves child care, child instruction, and care for adult family members, are higher than that of men, across multiple dimensions such as urban and rural residence, education, marital status, age, and personal income.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment is stated in the national constitution and the national law on the protection of women’s rights and interests, and implemented through several programmes of action for the development of Chinese women. For example, the National Programme of Action for the Development of Chinese Women (2021-2030) contains the latest national commitments for women’s development, and has also considered the need to support the implementation of the three child policy. As a member of the national mechanism to implement



the Programme of Action for the Development of Chinese Women, the National Health Commission has subsequently issued its own plan¹, including in particular supporting the all-round development of families and women through the formulation of family policies targeting the promotion of gender equality and women's development and together with other Government bodies, the formulation of fertility supportive policy/programme measures.

Based on the above, UNFPA China, in discussion with the Department of Population Monitoring and Family Development of NHC, agreed to conduct a study on the international experiences of responding to low fertility from a gender perspective under its "Population Dynamics" component in 2022, so as to provide international experience reference for China while similar work/life balance and male involvement policy/programme measures will be developed.

II. Purpose

This proposed study activity will develop a policy analysis report "Responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective: implications of international experiences for China", which will be based on reviewing the policies and programme measures of advanced low fertility countries from the perspectives of work-life balance and male participation to promote gender balance and reduce the challenges faced by women, analysis of their experiences and lessons learned as well as the associated contributing/or restrictive factors and production of reference recommendations for China.

III. Scope of Work

Specifically, the study will be centered around the following main activities:

Activity 1: conduct a comprehensive literature review to address two issues: 1) what policy/programme measures countries have taken to respond to low fertility from gender equality perspectives, and whether and to what extent, these policy/programme measures have achieved the expected targets; and 2) how the improvement in gender balance at home and in the workplace (not necessarily linked with any policy measures) changes fertility intentions based on the empirical review of the low fertility advanced country experiences. The process should produce a literature report detailing the different categories of policy/programme measures, their observed effects, correlations of their development with the evolving national social and economic context and fertility transition, etc. The process should also identify a few key policy/programme measures and priority countries (4-5 countries) that have high relevance with China's context, culture and/or demographic transition experiences, for in-depth analysis at the next stage. The review process should cover both the government policy documents as well as the academic journals and articles (particularly those peer-reviewed ones), among other sources of info considered relevant.

Activity 2: conduct in-depth and case analysis on the key policy/programme measures and countries identified in the first stage. The analysis for the selected countries should also address the two issues in the first stage, focusing on the correlations between the fertility transition process and the introduction of gender equality policies and programmes, whether or not they

¹See http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-04/09/content_5684258.htm.



have achieved the expected objectives and the associated contributing and restrictive factors, and as well as the interactions between improvement in gender balance and fertility intention.

Activity 3: taking into consideration the factors such as China's fertility rate, the implementation of fertility supportive policies in China, the similarity of sociocultural factors, etc., analyze the implications of advanced low fertility country experiences for China with an aim to provide a global perspective for China's policy development agenda. It should be highlighted that the review should also try to suggest different policy nudges to encourage couples to have more children that are not currently reflected in national policies in low fertility countries, based on the above analysis on how the improvement in gender balance at home and in the workplace changes fertility intentions.

IV. Duration and Working Schedule

The study will start from 1 July 2022 and be completed no later than 30 November 2022. The proposed timeline is as follows:

-1 -7 July: Complete an inception report including proposed main contents of the consultancy report and the activity implementation plan

-7 July - 7 August: Complete Activity 1 to produce a literature review report "Responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective", and also identify a few key policy/programme measure and priority countries for the next stage.

-7 August - 7 September: Complete Activity 2 to enrich the literature review report by supplying in-depth insights for key policy/programme measures and experiences of selected priority countries.

-7 September- 30 November: Based on the above research activities, draft, revise and finalize the consultancy report "Responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective: implications of international experiences for China"

V. Expected deliverables

Based on the working schedule above, the research team(s) is requested to submit deliverables as per the below timeline:

- 1) 7 July 2022: submit the inception report.
- 2) 7 August 2022: submit Report I: Literature review report "International experiences of responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective"
- 3) 7 September 2022: Report II: Responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective: experiences from selected countries and for key policy/programme measures
- 4) 30 November 2022: Final report "Responding to low fertility from a gender equality perspective: implications of international experiences for China". Of which, a draft report should be available by 15 October and revisions will be expected based on comments from NHC, UNFPA China, as well as relevant departments and experts to be invited.

All reports will be submitted in electronic format and in both Chinese and English.

VI. Required expertise, qualifications and competencies



This research requires a strong team of experts with different backgrounds. The expertise and requirements include but are not limited to:

- 1) Established long-term expertise in population and development studies and is familiar with China's demographic transition pattern and its driven factors;
- 2) Familiarity with the evolution of China's fertility policies and its factors behind the changes;
- 3) Previous experience of conducting international population and development studies;
- 4) High proficiency in both Chinese and English;
- 5) Ability to work under pressure and deliver high quality products within the given time;
- 6) Knowledge of UNFPA mandate, especially UNFPA's perspectives on responding to low fertility is a plus

VII. Project Management Arrangements

UNFPA China Deputy Representative and the Department of Population Monitoring and Family Development of the National Health Commission will be jointly responsible for the progress monitoring and quality control of the research. All research tasks will be completed by 30 November 2022.

VIII. Support from UNFPA China

Funding support:

UNFPA China will provide funding support at CNY 75,000, and any budget deficit above this amount will be covered by the research institution(s) to be contracted

Technical support:

UNFPA China will also provide technical support as below: 1) UNFPA reports on responding to low fertility released (two pieces); 2) position paper by UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office on responding to low fertility; and 3) assistance in coordinating experts from selected priority countries.

How to submit:

Interested institutes please submit a research plan (in English) to jia@unfpa.org and copy xlin@unfpa.org by 15 July 2022.