

Community-Based Research on the Intersections of Early Childhood Development and Women’s Agency and Choice in Tanzania

Terms of Reference for a Team of Consultants – August 2022

# About Firelight

Firelight believes in the power of African communities to create lasting, scalable change for Africa’s children, youth and families. Firelight believes that lasting change will come when communities create safe, strong and nurturing environments where children and youth thrive and are able to realize their extraordinary potential.

Firelight believes that today, community-based organizations (CBOs) and servant community leaders are one of the greatest un-realized assets in helping communities to create those safe, strong and nurturing environments, thereby changing the long-term trajectory of children and youth in Africa.

Through a mix of capital and bespoke mentoring, we help these community-based organizations realize their own collective visions of safe, strong and nurturing environments where children and youth thrive and can fulfill their potential.

## Firelight’s approach to research, evaluation, and learning

Firelight is committed to and experienced in supporting CBOs and communities to gather, analyze, use, and share data in development discussions and decisions. We also seek to centre and amplify the perspectives, insights, and analysis of community stakeholders who are most affected by the issues we are collectively thinking and talking about. Some examples of the way we have done or are doing this include listening to, documenting, and amplifying the perspectives of CBO leaders and practitioners around what success and impact mean to them, what skills and qualities enable them to effect long-term change in their communities, and how funders can better support and enable them in this work. (A summary of this research can be reviewed in our [report on community-driven systems change](https://www.firelightfoundation.org/cdsc).)

We seek to use participatory methods at all stages, but even more fundamentally, we seek to be guided and driven by local researchers, community leaders, and practitioners in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and interpretation of research studies. Furthermore, as an organization and in our interactions with CBOs and others, we are engaging in ongoing reflection, work, and adaptation to improve equity and social justice both internally and externally.

# Community-Based Research Consultancy

## Overview

Firelight is seeking a research team or consultancy firm with experience and skill in Global South intersectional feminist approaches and participatory methods, particularly in an African context. We would like to partner with a research team or consultancy firm with experience and skill in Global South intersectional feminist approaches and participatory methods, particularly in an African context. We expect to have two main researchers working on the project. We prefer to partner with a research team completely based in Tanzania, or with one member based in Tanzania while another might be based in another country.

The researchers will participatorily work with Firelight and four CBO partners located in Mwanza, Shinyanga, Kilimanjaro and Morogoro regions. The focus will be to refine our learning questions; design our research methodologies; collect, analyze, and make sense of data, and build and validate a contextually-grounded and socially-relevant knowledge base. The research partner will lead and facilitate much of the research process, provide guidance and advice, train and mentor community researchers, provide technical expertise and backstopping, and ensure the rigour and validity of the results.

## Background

Our proposed community-level research study focuses on the intersections of early childhood development and women’s agency and choices in Tanzania. Both of these issues, and the overlaps between them, have been of deep interest to our CBO partners and our own team for a few years now. In our initiatives focusing on early childhood development, community members, CBOs, and Firelight staff alike have all seen the overlaps and intersections in the issues facing young children and their mothers and other female family members – including the bidirectional effects of child care and women’s economic empowerment, along with the negative impacts of the limited involvement of fathers and other male family members in child rearing.

Firelight’s relationships, mutual knowledge sharing, and trust with CBO partners working on these very issues from different angles in Tanzania serves as a key asset in enabling us to facilitate this research study effectively with some of our CBO partners as community co-researchers.

## Objectives

Our goal is to surface and understand the relationships, intersections, hindrances, and opportunities between early childhood development and women’s agency and choice, and disseminate, validate, and expand this knowledge base in order to both deepen our collective understanding and to inform responsive and effective advocacy, policies, and interventions in both these areas. As systemic change at the community level requires community ownership and leadership, our goal is for the knowledge generation and dissemination to also be led by key community stakeholders, who are critical voices in development discussions and decisions at local, national, and regional levels.

Towards this goal, our proposed research study aims to participatorily develop community-led, community-level understandings of –

1. The values, beliefs, knowledge, practices, and systems that influence, support, and/or hinder the care, upbringing, and education of children (early childhood development);
2. The values, beliefs, knowledge, practices, and systems that influence, support, and/or hinder the opportunities, power, agency, choices, and roles of women at home and in broader society;
3. The current child care context and how it affects women’s agency and choices, including economic empowerment;
4. Initiatives (government, civil society, community self-help, private) and policies related to early childhood development, and the ways in which they affect, support, and/or hinder women’s agency and choices, including economic empowerment;
5. Initiatives (government, civil society, community self-help, private) and policies related women’s agency and choices, including economic empowerment, and the extent to which they affect, support, and/or hinder families’ care, upbringing, and education of their young children (early childhood development); and
6. The specific issues faced by adolescent mothers and the extent to which initiatives integrate their agency and access to choices with their roles and concerns as mothers of young children.

## Expected outcomes

Through the process of this research study, we expect that CBOs and communities will have and/or develop the resources, skills, and supports needed to carry out a comprehensive, participatory programme of research that generates relevant, insightful, and helpful knowledge.

Through the process of this research study, we hope to see ownership, interest, and uptake of the research process and findings among CBOs, communities, government, civil society, and funders.

As a result of this research inquiry, we expect that CBOs, communities, government, civil society, and funders will have community-specific data as well as a collective analysis of the ways in which ECD and women’s economic empowerment overlap and intersect – and how these connections, contradictions, and/or synergies can be addressed, mitigated, or strengthened to improve outcomes for both young children and women across Tanzania and other parts of East Africa.

## Activities / deliverables

The process will take 12 to 18 months, whereby the nature, frequency, and sequencing of activities will be discussed and refined with community and research partners, and may also need to be adjusted as we go along. Below is a high-level overview of expected activities and deliverables –

| **Activities** | **Deliverables/Outcomes** |
| --- | --- |
| * Participatory processes to refine learning questions, map out stakeholders, research design, and methodologies for data collection and analysis * Institutional and community-level ethical review processes | * Agreed upon framework for study * Tools for data collection developed * Ethics approval obtained |
| * Train CBO partners for data collection and analysis * Pilot and refine data collection tools and processes * Onsite support for data collection led by CBOs * Ongoing updates to national and district level government and civil society stakeholders * Ongoing engagement with community of learning that will be established/ coordinated by Firelight | * CBO partners trained and ready for data collection * Tools and processes piloted and refined * Data collected and documented * Participation in different networks/ fora/ community of learning |
| * *Participatory, ongoing, iterative processes of data collection, analysis, and sense-making* * Ongoing updates to national and district level government and civil society stakeholders * Ongoing engagement with community of learning | * Data analyzed, explored, and deepened through various methods * Gaps, contradictions, or areas needing clarity explored/ deepened with additional data * Findings starting to emerge * Participation in different networks/ fora/ community of learning |
| * Consolidation of analysis, exploration of themes and relationships/ patterns among themes * Validation of findings * Preparation of draft comprehensive report including executive summary * Disseminate findings and solicit feedback with government and civil society stakeholders, and community of learning * Work with Firelight to prepare presentations and different versions of report to share with different audiences | * Themes and relationships/ patterns among themes clearly documented and described * Findings validated by key stakeholders * Final report and required additional publications produced * Participation/ presentation of findings with different networks/ fora/ community of learning |

## Budget

Allocated total budget for consultants is approximately USD 32,000. This should include consultancy fees and consultant expenses (including consultant travel). Firelight and community partners have separate budgets for in-person workshops and data collection (led by community partners).

It is expected that the consultants' team or consultancy firm will clearly indicate in their proposal the approximate number of days for this consultancy within a 12 to 18 month period, based on the required activities and deliverables.

# Required Attributes for the Consultant Team

We are looking for a team of consultants or firm that has the following attributes and qualifications:

* Global South intersectional feminist approach
* Experience and demonstrated expertise in community-based research, including participatory approaches and methods to build knowledge
* Embraces and embodies Firelight’s values and standards (as described below)
* At least one team member is based in Tanzania
* At least one team member is fluent in Swahili
* Has the required professional affiliation to secure ethical clearance in Tanzania
* *Highly preferred:* Previous experience in early childhood development and/or women’s agency and choice (e.g., women’s economic empowerment) in eastern and southern Africa

# Firelight Values and Standards

Consultants will be asked to uphold the following values and standards.

## Values

Firelight is an organization that is deeply committed to child protection and safeguarding and to several critical values which guide our thinking and our actions in all situations. The successful consultant will not only share Firelight’s belief in the power of community and community-based solutions but also have a demonstrable track record in upholding the same values. These values include –

* We act with integrity in all our interactions.
* We are humble, and we act with humility.
* We seek action, growth, and impact through learning and listening.
* We are inclusive.
* We are accountable.
* We seek to strengthen each other.
* We are focused.

You can read more about our values commitment here: <https://www.firelightfoundation.org/values>

## Child protection and safeguarding

Firelight will take the consultant through our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the consultant will be expected to sign the policy and uphold its provisions throughout this consultancy.

## Learning and evaluation at Firelight

At Firelight, we value learning and evaluation processes that –

1. Are respectful and constructive in approach, focused on assets/strengths and areas for growth and improvement, rather than disparaging or judgmental.
2. Consider communities’, CBO grantee-partners’, Firelight’s, and funders’ conceptualizations or definitions of success for the particular initiative or activity.
3. Meaningfully and respectfully engage and integrate the perspectives of key stakeholders into the design, methodology, findings, and interpretations.
4. Use methodologies that are appropriate, ethical, and valid, from a research/evaluation perspective as well as from the perspectives of communities, CBO grantee-partners, and key stakeholders.
5. Holistically consider the different systems within which CBO grantee-partners and other key stakeholders operate, and how these systems may affect or influence partners’ and communities’ priorities, plans, activities, decisions, and outcomes.
6. Capture data and learnings on both ultimate, intermediate, and immediate outcomes.
7. Synthesize the findings so that they are clear and easy to understand, while maintaining the nuance inherent in the complexity of social change.
8. Share and validate findings with CBO grantee-partners, communities, Firelight, and funders in a timely manner.

# Expressions of interest

Interested consultant teams are requested to submit a brief proposal to [learning@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:learning@firelightfoundation.org) by Monday, August 29th, 2022 with the following information:

1. Profile of team/firm and CVs for the individual consultants proposed to work on this project
2. Two samples of previously prepared reports by the team or each individual (these will be kept in confidence and used only for the purpose of assessing the consultants’ fit for the project)
3. At least two references for similar work undertaken by the consultant team or each individual
4. *Brief* (2-5 pages) narrative describing how the consultant proposes to carry out this work, including –
   * Consultants’ professional background as it relates to the required attributes, their interest in this area, and their capacity to carry out this work
   * Proposed framework, approach, and methodology for carrying out the study
   * High level workplan
   * Proposed budget that includes consultant’s team or firm’s professional fees and all expenses (Firelight and CBO partners will cover costs for workshops at national and local level, but consultants’ budget would need to cover consultants’ travel expenses.)