



Terms of Reference: Political Environment and Context Analysis, and Baseline and Diagnostic Study

Design Phase: Systems Approaches to Advancing Education for Children in Protracted Conflict and Crisis Settings

Issued by: Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya (BNBR).

Date of issue: 9th October 2026.

Fee ceiling: KES 1,250,000 for professional fees (see Section 11.0).

Submission deadline: 19th October 2026

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1.0 Background

Children living in crisis- and conflict-affected parts of Kenya often have their education, safety and wellbeing disrupted by insecurity, displacement, climate shocks and poverty. Girls and children with disabilities are particularly affected.

Since 2017, Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya (BNBR) and its technical partner WorldBeing have delivered Youth First Kenya, a teacher-facilitated wellbeing and resilience programme approved by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. BNBR is a Kenyan public benefit organization working under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education. Through Youth First Kenya, BNBR has seen the difference that well-equipped and well-supported teachers and schools can make. It has also learned that lasting change cannot depend on individual teachers or short-term projects. Gaps in teacher preparation and support, psychosocial services and referral, data, financing and coordination continue to make it difficult for the education system to support children consistently, particularly during times of crisis.

With a design grant from Co-Impact, BNBR is running a nine-month Design Phase from September 2026 to May 2027. Working with government, schools, communities and other partners, BNBR will develop a Systems Change Vision and Strategy. The document follows Co-Impact's guidance and is built in five modules: the problem and the system of today (Module 1), the system of the future (Module 2), the strategy for change (Module 3), learning, measurement and evaluation (Module 4), and organisational readiness and strengthening (Module 5), together with a budget and resourcing plan.

The Design Phase focuses its learning in five coastal counties: Kwale, Lamu, Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Tana River. In these counties, exposure to insecurity, displacement and climate shocks meets an established Youth First Kenya presence and working relationships with county education officials. The Design Phase works at both county and national levels.

2.0 Purpose of the Assignment

BNBR's Design Phase Plan provides for a consultant to lead two linked pieces of work, both of which feed the analysis of the system of today. This TOR covers both.

The first is a **political environment and context analysis**, which is the core evidence for Module 1. It asks why children in crisis-affected settings are not yet reliably safe, supported and learning through the public system, and what forces sustain the status quo. A central question is why promising approaches, including BNBR's own, have not yet been institutionalised.

The second is a **light-touch baseline and diagnostic study**, carried out jointly with BNBR's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) team. It establishes the starting points

against which the Design Phase will later define its people-level and system-level outcomes, and identifies the evidence gaps that will shape the learning, measurement and evaluation plan in Module 4.

Taken together, the assignment should leave BNBR with a rigorous, evidence-based understanding of the problem, the system that produces it, and the starting points from which change will be measured.

3.0 Objectives

The consultant will:

3.1 describe the scale and significance of the core problem: how many children are affected, which groups (with particular attention to girls and children with disabilities), where, and how the problem shows up differently in the lives of different groups, using the best available data, estimates or proxies;

3.2 analyse the components and workings of the existing system, at national level and in the five counties, that cause the problem, covering both its formal components and its informal features, and explain why the problem persists and why earlier efforts, including BNBR's, have not been sufficient or institutionalised;

3.3 apply a political economy lens to the system, mapping the key actors, their roles, relationships, motivations, incentives and formal and informal power;

3.4 assess the state of women's and girls' voice, power, agency and leadership in the system, and the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, and of people with lived experience;

3.5 identify the powerful big-picture external forces acting on the system, including climate change, insecurity, displacement and poverty; and

3.6 establish concrete baselines for the system and, where data allow, for children's safety, wellbeing, participation and learning, disaggregated by sex and disability, and identify the evidence gaps that the learning, measurement and evaluation plan will need to address.

4.0 Scope

A. Geographic scope

The assignment covers the national level and the five focus counties: Kwale, Lamu, Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Tana River. The analysis should pay attention to both the central level and the local levels where service delivery takes place, which Co-Impact describes as the point where policy meets people. In Kenya this means examining national institutions, their officers deployed in the counties, and county government structures, and how they interact.

B. The system in focus

The system in focus is the public education system and the services connected to it that are meant to keep children in crisis-affected settings safe, supported and learning. The Design Phase Plan identifies its main formal elements as policy and strategy, the teacher workforce and its professional development, supervision by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, referral pathways for psychosocial and related support, financing and data. Alongside these, the analysis must examine the informal factors that shape how change happens in practice, namely norms, institutional relationships, incentives and power.

C. Actors

The Design Phase Plan names the following actors, whose roles the analysis should examine: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa, Quality Assurance and

Standards Officers, the National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission, the County Teacher Capacity Development Committees, and the education and social protection departments of the five counties. Education networks such as the Kenya Comprehensive Schools Heads Association and the Regional Education Learning Initiative, schools, communities, children and families, people with lived experience and development partners also fall within scope. The consultant should identify any other actors who play a significant role.

D. What is out of scope

The assignment does not include an evaluation of Youth First Kenya or of any other BNBR programme, although Youth First Kenya data will be used as evidence. It does not include BNBR's internal organisational readiness assessment for Module 5. It does not include writing the Vision and Strategy document or any of its modules, which BNBR will draft through its internal co-design process. It does not include designing the system of the future, the strategy for change or the learning, measurement and evaluation plan, although the consultant's findings will inform all three.

5.0 Component 1: Political Environment and Context Analysis

A. Questions to be answered

This component should provide BNBR with the evidence needed to understand the problem and the system of today, with the analysis focused on BNBR's programme context and the five focus counties. On the **problem**, the consultant should establish what the core problem is and why it matters; how many children are affected, which groups, and where, giving particular attention to girls, children with disabilities and children facing multiple forms of exclusion; how the problem shows up concretely in children's lives and how this differs between groups; how climate change is affecting or worsening the problem now and may do so in future; and what the short- and long-term benefits would be, for children and for society, if the problem were addressed. Where precise data are lacking, estimates or proxies should be used and their limitations stated.

On the system of today, the consultant should explain what in the existing system is causing the problem. The analysis should examine the frameworks of policy, law, regulation and mandate that govern key actors' decisions; the financial resources available, allocated, protected and spent; the key actors who hold or claim power, influence and input, including the human resources of the system, their numbers, reach, functions, mandates and capacities; the incentive and accountability mechanisms that monitor, motivate or sanction people across the system; the design and quality of programmes and services, including how key populations participate in them; the data and information available to decision-makers, the data infrastructure, how information flows and whether it is actually used; and the norms and common practices that shape assumptions and narratives, influence how things work and sometimes override formal rules. For each component, the analysis should distinguish the formal system (laws, policies, regulations, structures, budgets and financial flows) from its informal features (mental models, mindsets, culture, morale, networks and relationships), and show how things work at national level and in the counties.

On **causes and persistence**, the consultant should explain how these specific components and workings cause the problem for the children BNBR is focused on, at scale, and set out the evidence for that explanation. The analysis should also answer why the problem has not already been fixed: what other efforts have been or are being made to improve the system, why they have not been successful or sufficient, and why promising approaches, including Youth First Kenya, have not yet been institutionalised.

B. Political economy

The consultant will apply a political economy lens throughout, being specific and concrete. The analysis should build a system map that shows who the key actors are in relation to the problem and potential leverage points; what role each plays (who does, who pays, who benefits, who

suffers, who decides, who measures, who advocates, who informs and who influences); how data and information flow, or fail to flow, between them; and what formal and informal relationships connect them. It should examine actors' motivations and incentives and their formal and informal power, the broader political economy and context, and how these affect the way the system works.

The analysis should also examine the rules of the system and the forces that shape them: the system's goals, rules, regulations, policies and laws and how they are implemented; who holds whom accountable and through what approach, and whether this motivates or demotivates actors; whether feedback mechanisms exist, who uses them and for what purpose, and whether they are connected to accountability; and the forces that shape rules and their enforcement, such as ideas, norms, information flows, narratives and media. On financial resources, it should ask who pays, how much, for what and at what scale; how resources flow and who controls them at each level; who decides whether more or less funding is available; and whether additional resources might be available. On the workforce, it should ask who is and is not doing what for whom, and why; the skills, capacity and limitations of each part of the workforce; who leads, supervises and mentors; how performance is monitored, judged, rewarded or sanctioned; and where women and disadvantaged people are located within it.

C. Gender and disability inclusion

A gender lens will be applied throughout. The consultant should examine the state of girls' and women's voice, power, agency and leadership at all levels of the system; what keeps them from fully benefiting, participating and holding voice and power on an equal basis; the structural barriers, discriminatory norms and mental models in place; who is in charge and what rules keep the gendered status quo in place; and the key leverage points, risks and watch-outs for changing these.

A disability-inclusion lens, reflecting BNBR's mandate, will be applied alongside it. It should cover children with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, and the participation of people with lived experience in the system and in decisions about it.

D. External forces

The consultant should identify the powerful big-picture external forces acting on the context, the system, the problem and the children concerned, and explain how they make things worse. For this Design Phase these include, at a minimum, insecurity, displacement, climate shocks and poverty. The consultant should assess any other major external forces that materially affect the education system and the children concerned.

E. County and national analysis

The national analysis should set out the frameworks, institutions, financing and data that apply across the country. The county analyses should show how these play out in each of the five counties, where the system meets children, and how county-specific conditions, relationships and incentives shape it. The final analysis should identify which patterns are common across the system and which are specific to particular counties, so that BNBR can use the evidence in the county workshops and community forums that follow in Module 2.

6.0 Component 2: Light-Touch Baseline and Diagnostic Study

A. Purpose

The Design Phase Plan provides for BNBR's MERL team and the consultant to carry out a light-touch baseline and diagnostic study alongside the context analysis. The study will provide BNBR with concrete information on what the system looks like and does today and establish credible starting points for the outcomes that BNBR will define during the Design Phase. It will also document how the problem shows up in people's lives and identify the baseline measures and data sources that BNBR can use during implementation.

B. What the study will establish

The study will establish, as far as existing data and the light-touch design allow, baselines for the people-level outcomes the Design Phase is expected to focus on, namely children's safety, wellbeing, participation and learning, with specific attention to girls and children with disabilities, disaggregated by sex and disability. It will also establish baselines for the system-level areas identified in the Design Phase Plan, such as teacher development, supervision, psychosocial support and referral, data and financing, drawing on the system-of-today analysis in **Component 1**.

The study will identify where reliable baseline information exists, where it is weak or missing, and what additional information will need to be collected during the programme phase. In line with the Design Phase Plan, it will examine how existing government data and assessment information, including relevant Kenya National Examinations Council data, could be used to track progress rather than creating a parallel monitoring system. The gaps the study identifies will shape BNBR's learning, measurement and evaluation plan.

C. Method

The study is deliberately light-touch. It will combine focus group discussions and key informant interviews with a synthesis of existing evidence, including BNBR's own Youth First Kenya data, which BNBR will provide. It will share fieldwork with Component 1 wherever possible, so that a single round of data collection serves both components. It does not require a large-scale survey.

Responsibilities between the consultant and BNBR's MERL team will be agreed at inception. As a starting point, the consultant will design the baseline framework and tools, lead data collection and analysis, and write the baseline and diagnostic report, while the MERL Lead will provide BNBR data, review tools and analysis, and connect the findings to the learning, measurement and evaluation plan.

7.0 Methodology

The consultant will propose a detailed methodology in the technical proposal and refine it at inception with BNBR. The methodology must be qualitative and mixed-source, proportionate to the fee ceiling and the short timeframe, and designed so that the two components share data collection where possible. The methodology must also include a clear ethics and research-authorisation pathway for the baseline and any other primary research.

The work will begin with a desk review of relevant national and county policies, laws, strategies, plans and budgets; government, development partner, civil society and academic research; and BNBR documents, including the Design Phase Plan and Youth First Kenya data and reports, which BNBR will provide. The desk review should extract evidence against the questions in **Sections 5.0 and 6.0**, produce a preliminary picture of the system and the problem, and identify the gaps that fieldwork must fill.

Fieldwork will consist of key informant interviews and focus group discussions at national level and in each of the five counties. Key informants should be drawn purposively from the actors listed in Section 4.0 and any others the desk review identifies. Focus group discussions should explore how the system works in practice for children and the people around them and should deliberately include the perspectives of women and girls, people with disabilities and people with lived experience. The consultant will propose the categories and number of interviews and discussions in the technical proposal, with a clear analytical purpose for each, and justify the sample at inception. No primary data collection may begin until the research protocol has received the required ethics approval and research authorisation. Any direct engagement with children under 18 will take place only if BNBR agrees to it at inception, and only with appropriate consent, assent, safeguarding arrangements and ethical authorisation.

Findings should be triangulated across the desk review, interviews, discussions and existing data. The reports must clearly distinguish verified evidence from stakeholder perceptions, emerging patterns, contradictory evidence, the consultant's interpretation and remaining gaps. Perceptions must not be presented as fact.

Draft findings from **Components 1 and 2** will be tested with stakeholders at a validation workshop in **November 2026**, convened by BNBR, at which the consultant will present. The findings will then be developed into Module 1 through BNBR's internal co-design workshop. The government steering committee established for the Design Phase will also review the emerging analysis in November.

8.0 Deliverables and Timeline

The timeline follows the milestones in BNBR's Design Phase Plan, under which the System of Today work runs to **December 2026**, the validation workshop and first co-design workshop take place in **November 2026**, Module 1 is submitted to Co-Impact on **30 November 2026**, and reports are finalised after validation in **December 2026**. The timeline is therefore compressed, and applicants must be able to start immediately on contract signature.

Deliverable 1 Inception report and research protocol is due within five working days of contract signature. It will set out the refined research questions, analytical framework for both components, national and county design, proposed sample, data collection tools, consent and participant information materials, safeguarding procedures, data management arrangements, and the division of roles with BNBR's MERL team. The consultant will input into the research protocol for the baseline and any related primary research material, suitable for submission to the agreed ethics review body. The protocol package will include the study rationale, objectives and research questions, methodology and sampling, data collection tools, consent/assent procedures, risk and safeguarding measures, confidentiality and data protection arrangements, and analysis approach. BNBR and the consultant will agree to the final protocol promptly, and the consultant will follow up on the ethics review as soon as the submission package is complete.

Deliverable 2, Draft system of today and baseline report, with validation presentation, is due at least five working days before the November 2026 validation workshop. It will present the draft context analysis (**Component 1**) and the draft baseline and diagnostic findings (**Component 2**), at national level and for each of the five counties.

Deliverable 3, Module 1 evidence brief, is due by 23 November 2026. It will incorporate the validation feedback and be organised under the two headings of Co-Impact's Module 1: an overview of the problem, and the system of today. It will give BNBR the evidence it needs to draft and submit Module 1 by 30 November 2026.

Deliverable 4, Final political environment and context analysis report and final baseline and diagnostic report, is due on **30th November 2026**. The context analysis report will include the problem overview, the system-of-today analysis by component, the political economy analysis and system map, the gender and disability-inclusion analysis, the external forces, an explanation of why the problem persists, and a section that translates the findings into implications for the system of the future and the strategy for change. The baseline and diagnostic report will set out the baselines established, their data sources and limitations, and the evidence gaps for the learning, measurement and evaluation plan. Anonymised datasets and tools will be handed over with this deliverable.

9.0 Ethics, Safeguarding and Data Protection

The consultant must obtain informed consent from every participant, explaining the purpose of the assignment, that participation is voluntary, how confidentiality will be protected and how findings will be used. Participants' identities must be protected: findings will be reported by stakeholder category rather than by name, and nothing will be attributed to an individual without their explicit written consent. Because the analysis deals with power, incentives and institutional relationships, politically sensitive statements must be handled with particular care, anonymised, and kept separate from the consultant's own findings and interpretation. BNBR and the

consultant will review any risks before findings are shared beyond BNBR, the government steering committee and Co-Impact.

The consultant must apply do-no-harm principles, follow security advice, and not travel to areas under security advisories, using remote interviews where necessary. The consultant must comply with BNBR's safeguarding policy and code of conduct, which BNBR will share at contracting, and report any safeguarding concern immediately through BNBR's designated route. The consultant will work hand in hand with BNBR MERL team to finalize the research protocol and supporting the ethics submission and any revisions requested by the ethics review body. No primary data collection may begin until ethics approval and any required research authorisation have been obtained.

All personal data will be processed in line with Kenya's Data Protection Act (2019) and BNBR's data protection requirements. Notes and recordings will be stored securely in encrypted, password-protected files accessible only to the consultant team. Data handed to BNBR will be anonymised, and raw data will be deleted from the consultant's devices within 30 days of completion, with written confirmation.

10.0 Management and Reporting

The consultant will report directly to the MERL Lead, who will serve as the primary point person for this assignment. The MERL Lead will oversee the assignment, co-lead the baseline and diagnostic study, coordinate feedback from the wider team (including the Systems Change Coach), and approve deliverables in writing.

The Project Coordinator (PC) will support day-to-day coordination, including field logistics, workshops, and coordinating links with relevant offices for letters of introduction and stakeholder outreach.

BNBR will provide relevant documents and data, and letters of introduction to government and partner stakeholders. BNBR will convene and fund the validation workshop and arrange and fund field logistics for data collection (Section 11.0).

The consultant will deliver the deliverables to the agreed quality and timeline, manage their own team and tools, comply with Section 9.0, report progress weekly and flag risks or delays promptly, and hand over all anonymised data, tools and outputs on completion.

11.0 Budget and Payment

The fee ceiling for this assignment is **KES 1,250,000 for professional consultancy fees**. The proposed professional fee should cover the consultant's technical and professional inputs required to deliver the assignment, including consultancy time, data collection and analysis, report writing, meetings/work sessions, and costs associated with facilitating and engaging data respondents.

Costs related to ethical review, research/ethics approval, regulatory approvals, or other statutory review processes are not included in the KES 1,250,000 professional fee ceiling. Where applicable, such costs should be identified separately for BNBR's consideration and approval.

BNBR will meet costs for **BNBR-organised activities and related field logistics**, including travel, accommodation, venues, and participant reimbursements, in accordance with its policies. Where the consultant participates in such activities to support the assignment, these costs will be covered by BNBR.

12.0 Consultant Profile

The assignment may be carried out by an individual consultant or a small team. The lead consultant should hold at least a master's degree or higher in public policy, political science, development studies, education policy, governance, social sciences or a related field.

They should have at least seven years' experience in research and analysis, including completed political economy or context analyses and baseline or diagnostic studies, and should have strong qualitative research skills, including key informant interviews and focus group discussions, with evidence of ethical practice.

Demonstrated systems thinking, experience of national and county government systems in Kenya, and excellent analytical writing in English are essential.

The team should also bring experience applying gender and disability-inclusion analysis, and familiarity with education, teacher development, child protection or psychosocial support systems.

Experience in Kenya's coastal counties or in crisis-affected settings, experience of systems-change or strategy design processes for philanthropic funders, and team members who speak Kiswahili and local languages used in the five counties will be advantages.

13.0 Proposal Requirements

Applicants should submit a technical proposal of no more than twelve pages, excluding annexes. It should set out their understanding of the assignment and of Co-Impact's Module 1 requirements; the proposed methodology for each of the two components and how they will share data collection; the national and county design and the proposed sample; the approach to gender and disability inclusion, ethics, safeguarding and research authorisation; a workplan showing how the deliverables will be met within the Design Phase milestones, including the 30 November 2026 Module 1 submission; the level of effort for each team member; and the team's composition and roles.

The technical proposal should be accompanied by two examples of comparable assignments, including at least one report or extract (anonymised if necessary); CVs of all proposed team members of no more than three pages each; and three professional references from recent clients. The financial proposal should be submitted separately and should show professional fees as a day rate multiplied by the number of days for each team member, any applicable taxes, and any other expected costs listed separately.

14.0 Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated out of 100 marks. Up to 15 marks will be given for understanding of the assignment, 25 for the technical methodology across both components, 20 for relevant experience in comparable assignments, 15 for expertise in political economy and systems analysis, 10 for team expertise, including gender and disability inclusion and Kenya and county experience, 5 for the feasibility of the workplan within the Design Phase timeline, and 10 for the financial proposal. Only proposals scoring at least 63 of the 90 technical marks will have their financial proposals evaluated. BNBR shall then interview shortlisted applicants.

15.0 Intellectual Property and Confidentiality

All outputs, data, tools and materials produced under this assignment belong to BNBR. The consultant may not publish, present or share any part of them without BNBR's prior written consent, although, with BNBR's consent, they may cite the assignment in their professional profile without disclosing confidential content. The consultant must treat all information obtained during the assignment as confidential, including information about government decision-making, stakeholder positions, individual statements and BNBR's internal affairs. This obligation

continues after the contract ends. The consultant will sign BNBR's confidentiality and safeguarding undertakings before starting work.

16.0 How to Apply

Proposals should be sent by email to **info@basicneedskenya.org**, with the subject line **"Context Analysis and Baseline Study"**. The technical and financial proposals should be submitted as two separate PDF files. The deadline for proposals is **19th October 2026**. Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted, and BNBR is not obliged to accept any proposal.