

Important information

MECS is seeking a consultant or consultancy team to conduct data collection on **institutional cooking practices**. The studies can take place in Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The quality of proposals received will determine which countries are chosen from those listed.

Given the global dispersal of the countries, the need to achieve good value for money, and the current difficulties with international travel due to Covid-19 we do not anticipate that a consultant will submit a proposal for more than one country. Consultants wishing to submit proposals for multiple countries must demonstrate through an additional section in their response to these ToRs why and how they are specifically qualified and able to conduct the work in multiple countries. Generic proposals not tailored to a specific country context will be rejected without review.

Project Background

The role of cooking and meal provision in institutional settings often contributes to wider institutional goals, developmental mandates and business and operating processes. These include the improved nutrition, attendance and attainment aims of school feeding programmes, food as part of cultural and religious rituals, community meal provision as part of the early stages of humanitarian responses and providing accessible and affordable meals for workers. These contextual factors shape what food is cooked, how meals are prepared and the expectations from those eating. It is therefore essential to consider institutional cooking as embedded within wider systems, as opposed to as discrete, universalised and technical processes.

Institutional cooking often falls in a gap between global agendas promoting electricity access and feeding programmes. Taking school cooking as an example of this, electrification efforts have focused on providing lights, fans and access to ICT, which are seen as key to improving educational attainment as well as the comfort of attending school. Feeding programmes have sought to improve the nutrition and health of students, boost attendance and concentration of students and support local agriculture. As a niche between these two large efforts, institutional cooking has arguably been overlooked, with little policy or research focus, thus continuing a dependence on existing biomass cooking for meal delivery. There are recent exceptions to this, such as WFP *Energising School Feeding* programme, which integrates energy concerns into feeding programmes (WFP, 2020) and LPG inclusion within India's national midday meal scheme (Gole, 2020). The narrative changes required to integrate concerns around energy into feeding programmes, and likewise, concerns around meal provision within energy access efforts is a target of the MECS institutional cooking strategy, but requires an increased evidence base.

Reliance on biomass for institutional presents potential health, environmental and sustainability issues. In some countries, the use of firewood for institutional cooking has been flagged as having a potential impact on landscape degradation and deforestation (WFP, 2016), through this is hard to quantify accurately. The emission of black carbon in institutional cooking causes damaging environmentally damaging emissions (MacCarty et al., 2008). Additionally, the use of biomass in institutional causes indoor air pollution (WHO, 2018), including the emissions of carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and 2.5 µm particulate matter, potentially causing severe health issues for those working in and around institutional kitchens (McCord et al., 2017), which constitutes significant labour and

safety issues. The financial cost of sourcing biomass has implications for institutions, where more cost-effective mechanisms for modern energy cooking could provide cost savings for the institutions themselves or for parents and patrons contributing fuel to run kitchens.

The current formulation of institutional cooking varies by institution and context, with the sourcing of food, financing, fuel and cooking technologies dependent on a range of external and internal factors. Research providing a baseline understanding of IC within specific contexts is currently lacking, an issue which this research aims to address. This is important in understanding how modern fuels might be adopted and practices might evolve to support or inhibit modern energy cooking.

Research Objectives

These terms of reference call for data collection to support evidence into how institutional cooking currently functions, in order to inform transitions pathways towards modern energy cooking.

This will inform future work with MECS in designing, testing and implementing modern energy cooking appliances and services in institutional kitchens and in supporting the development of sustainable delivery systems, financing mechanisms and supporting policy and practitioner ecosystems.

Scope of Work

The core research question informing the data collection is:

What do cooking practices in institutional settings (such as in schools, hospitals, prisons, canteens, religious/community centres etc.) currently look like?

The data collection should address the following sub-questions;

1. Who undertakes the cooking in institutions and what are the decision making structures around meal provision? Where do those cooking meals come from, how are they recruited and what training do they have?
2. What are the key considerations for modern energy in institutional settings in terms of:
 - a. menus and current cooking processes;
 - b. the use of space within institutional kitchens;
 - c. access to resources and facilities such as reliable electricity supply, water supply;
 - d. cultural, religious and health concerns relating to meal provision and food preparation?
3. What are the current costs associated with cooking? How do those in decision making roles in institutional kitchens perceive barriers and opportunities for moving to modern energy cooking (including electric appliances, LPG, biogas etc.)?
4. How do those working in institutional kitchens perceive barriers and opportunities for moving to modern energy cooking? How are these linked to their experiences at home or in other settings?
5. What are the current cooking appliances and fuels? How are they sourced and who pays for them? What methods, if any, are currently used to reduce fuel consumption in the cooking process (i.e. batch cooking off-site, preheating water, etc.)?
6. How are choices of food made in the institution? What are the key considerations and do they change at different times of year?

These 6 questions form the minimum requirements of the study. Consultants are encouraged to expand the questions asked to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of institutional cooking.

The following activities must be included in the proposal. All activities should be done in all institutions.

1: Baseline survey: Gather data on current cooking practices based on the 6 research sub-questions.

2: Semi-structured interviews: Interviews with key stakeholders including institutional cooks/chefs, decision makers and managers to understand:

- the structure of the institution and how decisions are made;
- the priorities and concerns with respect to current cooking practices and potential shifts to modern energy appliances from different actors;
- key considerations in terms of how menus are decided, specific religious and cultural considerations in cooking processes and nutritional aspects of food being cooked.

3: Development of vignettes:

Take pictures and/or videos of institutional cooking spaces and activities to understand how these spaces are used and what practices and behaviours are central to cooking processes are highly valuable to the MECS programme. From across the interviews, vignettes from a minimum of 5 varied types of institution must be developed showcasing key findings from the data collection. A vignette is written description of both the key people and the spaces where cooking is undertaken accompanied with a series of images and/or a short video (e.g. a talking head, cooking video and/or a kitchen tour). Consent forms for the collection and use of personal images will be provided by MECS.

Recruiting participants

The consultant is responsible for sourcing institutions to study and securing their participation. The following criteria are to be met:

- Data collection should be done at 25-30 institutions, with a mix of different types of institution including schools, hospitals/health centres, prisons, canteens and religious/community centres. The sample should include at least 15 schools.
- These institutions should currently cook entirely or partly with biomass and at least some should pay for cooking fuel.
- They can be located in urban, peri-urban contexts or rural areas but there should be a mixture of each included in the sample.

The consultant should indicate how they intend to recruit the participants and provide a brief description of the characteristics for each location selected.

Deliverables, budget, and duration

The research is expected to commence no later than **1st October 2021**. All contracting will be completed prior to the 1st October. All deliverables must be completed and delivered no later than **15 January 2022**. These dates are non-negotiable. The consultant should demonstrate in their response to these ToRs how the work can be completed within the time available.

The total budget is a maximum of £15,000 (ex VAT where applicable).

Payment is contingent on successful completion of all deliverables.

Deliverable	Payment value
Contract signing	20%
- Draft research tool developed (5 days after start of contract) - Pilot responses from two initial institutions to check for usability before full data collection goes ahead	10%
Full data sets - All interviews to be translated into English and transcribed verbatim (summaries of discussions will not be accepted) - All survey data to be translated, entered into a suitable computer programme (e.g. Microsoft excel), and cleaned ready for additional analysis.	30%
Five vignettes from across the interviews Any additional images and videos collected (with permissions).	20%
Final report (concise, e.g. 10 pages) and follow up interview (with the MECS Institutions lead). The report should focus on the study context (method, geography, social and economic context), feedback from any enumerators/survey conductors, and initial findings from the interviews and surveys.	20%

Communication and Reporting

The contractual requirements will be managed by the MECS Programme Manager of Loughborough University. All other communications and reporting, including in-country consultation, task management and consultations on the research process, will be managed by the Institutional Lead. Support for the consultant/organisation will be provided in conjunction with the relevant country Link Researcher and other relevant MECS team members.

The consultant/organisation is expected to communicate with the Institutional Lead regularly throughout the project via two-weekly update meetings or phone calls, WhatsApp communication and emails, on:

- research progress and milestones achieved;
- anticipated challenges or changes to research plans, activities and timelines;
- upcoming activities and next steps; and
- delays or concerns on reporting.

All meetings and appointments to discuss the overall progress of the project against the contract will be agreed and arranged in advance and at mutually convenient times. Any significant changes to the approved research plan and timelines have to be discussed and approved in advance.

Loughborough University reserves the right to request the consultant/organisation to make revisions to the deliverables if they do not meet the required quality. The consultant/organisation will be required to make these revisions at no additional costs to Loughborough University.

Expertise required

The consultant/s doing the field work will be the primary point of contact between participants and MECS programme. It is, therefore, important that they are polite, courteous, fully informed about the programme and able to answer participants' queries. The consultant should demonstrate experience in using the qualitative methods required for this study and details of experience on similar studies.

Responding to these ToRs

Responses should be a maximum of 8 pages with up to 3 additional CVs (no more than 2 pages each).

Please provide the following when responding to these ToRs

- State explicitly which country context will be studied.
- A description of how the proposed activities will be designed and implemented to address the research questions.
- A description of how institutions will be recruited for the research and the selection/sampling strategy to access a range of types of institutions with different fuel payment structures
- An initial draft of the research tools to be used.
- A detailed breakdown of the budget in terms of personnel, materials, travel etc. Where costs have been estimated please highlight these and provide a brief explanation of the assumptions used to generate the cost.
- Details of all personnel who will be involved in the study, along with their responsibilities.
- A proposed Gantt chart of activities.
- An assessment of how COVID-19 might impact on the proposed activities and whether any mitigation measures can be put in place.

Proposals should be sent to MECS (mecs@lboro.ac.uk) with the subject '**Institutional baseline: [COUNTRY SELECTED] – add relevant country name**'. All proposals must be received by 23:59 GMT on **24 August 2021**.

Assessing proposals

Shortlisted consultants may be invited to an interview in order to finalise selection. The assessment process will take into consideration the criteria below in order to ensure **value for money**.

- Quality of proposal and methodology;
- Appreciation and understanding of the task;
- Skills, expertise and experience of consultant/organisation team members;
- Past performance (CV);
- Proposed management of the activities;
- Price.

Ethical considerations

All research must be in line with the Code of Practice for research, Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct (UK Research Integrity Office, 2009).

The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) is an independent charity, offering support to the public, researchers and organisations to further good practice in academic, scientific and medical research. Its confidential advice service is available to free of charge to individuals (members of the public, research participants, patients, researchers and students) and subscribing organisations. Their advice service can be [accessed here](#).

At a minimum, participants must not be subjected to physical, social, legal or psychological harm. Due consideration and ethical steps must be taken into safeguarding all participants, especially the vulnerable. A detailed Participation Information Sheet explaining the full scope of the study, what confidentiality entails, and that no participants will be forced into participating, must be provided at recruitment. Participants are to be made aware that participation is fully voluntary and there are no repercussions if they choose to no longer participate in the study at any point in time. Participants should, ideally, sign a consent form which includes consent for the use of photographs and videos.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. With regards to confidentiality and privacy of participation, participants must be informed that their anonymity will be maintained in any outputs and that all identifiable markers will be removed from any data sets that are published. Additionally, due consideration must be made to ensure that participants are safeguarded during the research process in line with the local government issued guidelines around COVID-19.

The consultant will be responsible for securing any research or ethical permissions needed from local authorities in each of the field work locations. There may be additional ethical, or research clearance needed for this kind of user centric design research in the chosen country.

MECS is funded by UK Aid through the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office. It is a partnership between researchers, innovators, policy makers, and ESMAP drawing on their expertise and relevant work from around the world to co-construct new knowledge with practitioners and the private sector. It is led by Loughborough University, UK.