

Assignment

MECS is seeking a consultant/s to conduct an exploration of how people living in urban areas of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, and Ghana learn to cook.

Each country should be treated as a separate submission.

Project Background

MECS is supporting the transition of low-income economies from biomass to the use of modern energy cooking services (i.e. cooking with electricity, gas or renewable energies). It calls for a greater focus on modern energy as the source of clean cooking and has evidenced that cooking with modern energy using energy-efficient appliances can be cost effective, particularly for urban communities.

In a post on a Kenyan cooking page on Facebook, a discussion on where and how people ‘could learn to cook’ showed that many members felt frustration at not having been taught to cook, or had not found formal cooking classes – especially as they had moved away from their homes and were living in peri-urban or urban areas. Whilst a few group members offered their services to one another in the form of small group cooking lessons – either in person or via online – several made reference to the learning via social media: “Cooking can be self-taught too. If you aren’t able to take classes, YouTube can be of great help,” and “Kuna yu tube shannols. Just install wifi and you are good to go.”

Our hypothesis is: *The acquisition of cooking skills has largely moved away from the family/household kitchen space – i.e. from mother to daughter – with younger generations, including men, favouring learning to cook via digital platforms such as YouTube and social media platforms.*

Scope of Work

The consultant/s are required to collect data in order to answer the following questions;

1. When and how do individuals learn to cook? From whom? Or, alternatively, from what (social media, YouTube, etc.)?
2. If online media is an effective channel, why does it hold such appeal?
3. Are there different ways of cooking and learning to cook depending on generations?
4. What dishes are taught and mastered? What techniques, tricks or shortcuts in cooking, do individuals adopt? And are these dishes/techniques mastered at different life stages and why?
5. What influences their longer-term cooking practices?
6. How do they feel (e.g. consider the emotive elements of cooking - how cooking and meal choices feed into perceptions of cultural identity, relationships, etc) about modern alternatives of cooking/eating?
7. What ambitions do they have for their cooking ability? And how are their aspirations formed/influenced?
8. What does the future of cooking look like?
9. What does modern energy look like to them, and how will they learn to adapt to this transition?

These 9 questions form the minimum requirements of the study. Consultants are encouraged to expand the questions asked to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of how people learn to cook.

The following activities must be included in the proposal:

1: Open-ended interviews: conducted in **10 households** to understand how people learn to cook. If possible (covid permitting), an observation of the kitchen/cooking space to understand the composition and organisation of the kitchen/cooking space, the way in which participants approach the kitchen tools, appliances, fuels and technologies they are engaging with, and the techniques employed.

2: Focus groups:

- **2 focus groups of 12 women each who cook** – it is suggested that this be divided according to age (for example, mothers and daughters, young and old) to determine whether learning to cook has changed across generations, and how; please keep in mind these groups should be a cross-section of the urban spaces and be inclusive of all economic and social diversities; these groups should **not** be professional cooks/food bloggers, etc;
- **1 focus group of 12 men who cook** – Ideally, we would like this group to focus on men who have migrated to urban areas for work or those in displaced settings, who are suddenly living alone or in spaces (e.g. compounds) where there are no women to do the cooking; questions should include what they cook; how they have learnt to cook; if they live in a shared space, how is the cooking divided; what cooking practices do they rely on outside of the family home;
- **1 focus group of 10-12 local food bloggers/vloggers** (both men and women) to understand the contents, reach and methods that cooking blogs/vlogs have and the audiences that they attract.

Members of households selected for open-ended interviews may also participate in focus groups. It would be ideal for the focus groups to be conducted after the interviews so that the individual experience and personal view is accurately captured prior to the potential contamination in Focus Groups.

3: Development of vignettes: A vignette is a descriptive story accompanied by an image, or series of images, or a short video (e.g. a talking head). Vignettes should be developed, in collaboration with willing research participants, during the data collection phase. Consent forms for the collection and use of personal images will be provided by MECS.

Recruiting participants

The research is expected to take place in urban and peri-urban households within the country, representing a cross-section of the local urban population (inclusive of migrant workers/those from other regions, people living with disabilities) and diverse cooking cultures.

The consultant is responsible for sourcing households and participants and securing their participation. Participants should be representative of both the diverse demographics of urban spaces, including people living with disabilities, displaced persons (refugee, IDP or otherwise); and the range of cooking cultures in the country. This is imperative as cooking practices vary considerably according to region, access and ability.

The consultant should indicate where 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 2022**. All deliverables must be completed and delivered no later than **13th January 2023**. 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 £12,000 (ex VAT where applicable).

Payment is contingent on successful completion of all deliverables.

Deliverable	Payment value
Contract signing	20%
At week 8 – a presentation and review of findings to date, in conjunction with the research lead.	20%
Final report inducing analysis of findings from the interviews and focus groups. Eight vignettes from across the interviews and focus groups	60%

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 Modern Eating Coordinator. 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 ME Coordinator 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.

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 participants will be recruited.
- 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 '**Learning to Cook: [COUNTRY SELECTED] – add relevant country name**'. All proposals must be received by 23:59 GMT on **23 August 2022**.

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 completed as part of the recruitment process.

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.