HML Ethics Review Board

# Research Ethics Review Document

**Review of UNICEF Research Project Materials for the Protection of Human Subjects**

v.2023.2

This document serves to meet UNICEF ethical standards in research and is the official record of an ethics review. It is designed to ensure effective processes and accountability for ethical oversight and to ensure the protection of, and respect for, child and adult rights within all research, evaluation, and data collection processes undertaken or commissioned by UNICEF. It conforms with the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis; Document Number: CF/PD/DRP/2015-001; Effective Date: 01 April 2015, Issued by Director, Division of Data, Research and Policy.

## The Purpose of Research Ethics Review

The purpose of an Ethics Review Board (ERB) or Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the protection of human research subjects' rights. These rights include *Respect* for individuals to make free decisions, *Justice or equity* regarding distribution of the burdens and benefits of research, and *Beneficence* or the obligation to do good and avoid harm.

ERBs review research protocols that involve the collection and analysis of data from human subjects to ensure that ethical standards are upheld. This is to protect the rights and welfare of subjects and to ensure that:

- subjects know the purpose of the study and are not placed at undue risk;
- participation is voluntary and confidential;
- subjects are provided and agree to informed consent prior to their participation;
- relevant protocols are in place to assure subjects' protection and safety, and;
- data collection and analysis does not result in the violation of privacy or discrimination.

Before issuing approval, the ERB must determine that the following requirements are satisfied:

- informed consent is sought from each subject or the subject's legally authorized representative;
- the proposed research design is scientifically sound and that risks to subjects are minimized;
- any risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits;
- subject selection is equitable;
- safeguards are included for subjects likely to be vulnerable to undue influence or coercion;
- subjects' safety, privacy, and confidentiality are maximized.

| **Materials Requested for Review:** | **Also, please include:** |
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| 1. Inception Report / Research Protocol, containing, e.g.,: specific aims or objectives, research questions, study design, subject recruitment, subject protection and data protection plans.<br>2. Copies of all Informed Consent documents.<br>3. Copies of all data collection instruments. | 4. Written protocols to ensure subjects' safety.*<br>5. Written protocols for the protection of human subjects' identities.*<br>6. Written protocols for the protection of data.*<br>7. Other relevant documents.<br>*These may be statements incorporated into research plans and/or embedded in a single protection protocol.<br>. |

HML IRB is an autonomous committee authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, FWA #1102, IORG #850), to review and approve research involving human subjects before the start of research, and to conduct annual reviews of that research independent of affiliation with the research organization submitting materials for review.

Please submit your materials in English for review to:
D. Michael Anderson, PhD, MPH, HML IRB Chair & Human Subjects Protections Director
and Penelope A. Lantz, JD, HML IRB General Counsel
unicef@hmlirb.com

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# UNICEF Research Ethics Review for Human Subjects' Protections

**→ INVESTIGATORS: Please confirm your project information and any additional information requested below.**

| Section 1 | Project Overview<br>Please provide any requested information | |
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| 1.1 | **Project Title:** | ***Evaluation of the Child Protection System in Belize*** |
| 1.2 | **HML IRB Research Ethics Review ID#:** | 702BELI23 |
| 1.3 | **Initiating UNICEF Official:**<br>Name, office, email | Paulette Wade; M & E Specialist. Melissa Benn-Sobers; Finance Associate. Belize CO<br>pwade@unicef.org and belizeprocurement@unicef.org respectively. |
| 1.4 | **Principal Investigator/Project Manager:**<br>Name, degree(s), organization, & address | Emmanuel Wireko Antwi-Boasiako, Mphil<br>Senior Associate at Maestral International |
| 1.5 | **Other Key Personnel:**<br>Names & titles | Danica Waiti, Senior Associate at Maestral International<br>Peta-Gaye Bookall, Senior Associate at Maestral International |
| 1.6 | **Contracting Firm:**<br>Name & address | Maestral International<br>150 S 5th St #2850<br>Minneapolis, MN 55402 USA |
| 1.7 | **Primary study site(s):**<br>CO, RO, countries | Belize (Districts – Corozal, Orange Walk, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo) |
| 1.8 | **Project duration:**<br>Dates from -- to | October, 2022 to August, 2023 |
| 1.9 | **Duration of Subjects' Participation:**<br>Dates from -- to | 1st May to 19th May, 2023 |
| 1.10 | **Thematic Area/Areas:** | Child Protection Choose an item. Choose an item. |

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| **1.11** | **Target population:** | Government of Belize, including Ministries, Departments and Agencies involved in Child Protection<br>UNICEF Latin America and The Caribbean Regional Office<br>UNICEF Belize<br>Other Government and Non-Government Partners/Stakeholders in Belize |

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| **Date of ERB Request** | 13 March 2023 |
| **Date(s) ERB Comments Returned** | 17 March 2023 |
| **Date Final Documents Received** | 18 April 2023 |
| **DATE OF ERB APPROVAL** | 19 April 2023 |

## UNICEF Ethics Review Process

HML Ethics Review Board (UNICEF LTAS 42107154) will conduct a research ethics review of submitted materials and make comments below under **Additional Information Needed**. We will then return this template for responses from investigators.

Please respond to our comments in another colour, directly under each comment.

- Please provide any requested or revised materials, and please note where revisions to your materials may be found by page or paragraph number.
- Please do not alter ERB comments or the format of this document.

This HML ERB review document serves as the official record of the ethics review for the project named below. This document, including all comments and responses, will be retained by UNICEF and HML ERB as a record of this review. Once you and we have agreed on the ethical rights of your research subjects, we will issue a letter of approval.

| | Ethics Review Board Criteria of Interest | Additional Information Needed → Investigators: Please respond to ERB info requests in another color directly below the request | X or NA equal PASS (for ERB use) |
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| Section 2 | ***ERB Submission:*** **Are all requested project information, materials, and final documents provided separately or incorporated in text? This includes:** | | |
| 2.1 | **Inception Report or Research Protocol……X** e.g.,: specific aims or objectives, research questions, study design, analysis & dissemination plans | | X |
| 2.2 | **Informed Consent documents……X** | In your request for ethical review you state that five informed consents were provided. However, we only received one that appears to be for interviews.<br><br>Please provide the ICs for focus groups, parental consent, child assent for interviews and focus groups, the U-Report survey and the social worker survey. See Section 7 below for guidance.<br>ICs have been provided for FGDs, KIIs and Survey Questionnaires. Child assent and parental consent forms have also been attached.<br>UNICEF already has a child assent procedure built into the U-Report survey. This will be facilitated by UNICEF. We have, however, attached a usable child assent form for the U-Report Survey. | X |
| 2.3 | **Surveys and data collection instruments……X** | Please provide the online survey to be administered to child protection officers and social workers using Survey Monkey.<br>Attached as part of tools in the Supporting Document Folder is a draft survey questionnaire that will be administered online | X |

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| | | Your data collection tools for caregivers and children are not suitable for a focus group because they both ask specifics about personal experiences with child protection. Please confirm you will interview parents and children individually or if you will conduct focus groups, provide appropriate focus group discussion guides.<br>Maestral will interview children and their caregivers separately in a focus group discussion format. Two different questionnaires have been developed accordingly and a focus group discussion guide for use with children has been attached, as per 6.5. Also, the experience sharing is limited to type of support sought and whether they were satisfied (without asking for further details) | |
| 2.4 | Written protocols to ensure subjects' safety | | X |
| 2.5 | Written protocols for protection of subjects' identities | | X |
| 2.6 | Written protocols for protection of data | | X |
| 2.7 | Other relevant documents | | X |
| 2.8 | Is *UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards* cited? | | X |
| 2.9 | Have informed consent and data collection instruments been pre-tested?<br>a. yes……..……..<br>b. no……..…..……..X<br>c. NR……..……..…….. | Please respond.<br>No, they are yet to be pre-tested, but they were developed and reviewed by in-country stakeholders to ensure suitability for use in local settings | X |
| 2.10 | Are all submitted documents final versions?<br>a. yes……..……..X<br>b. no……..…..……..<br>c. NR……..……..…….. | Please respond.<br>Yes, these documents have been reviewed and revised. | X |
| 2.11 | May the final protocol and instruments be included in an internal UNICEF searchable database for colleagues to learn from your work? | Please respond: INCLUDE or OMIT?<br>It is expected that UNICEF will keep these protocols and instruments for their reference and use<br>INCLUDE | X |
| 2.12 | Additional comments or suggestions | | X |
| **Section 3** | ***Research Design:* Do submitted materials describe the proposed research? This includes:** | | |

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| 3.1 | Is the study's background, rationale, and study design scientifically sound? | On p.29 of the IR you list data collection and subject types, but you do not include caregivers or beneficiaries in that list. These are your most vulnerable subject types. Please revise the IR to justify data collection with these groups or explain why the data cannot be collected another way.<br>IR has been revised to list children and caregivers in data collection and subject types (Page 41). Beneficiaries had already been captured in Sampling and Respondents Matrix in the IR (kindly refer to Annex 7)<br><br>Beneficiaries, such as children who have been or are current recipients of child protective services will be included in the evaluation study. The rationale for their inclusion is that, their views, wishes, feelings, perspective and experiences are critical to increasing scientific and professional knowledge designed to improve the condition of children, families and communities across diverse contexts, characteristics and vulnerabilities. Their inputs will also contribute to the advancement and evolution of programs, interventions, resources, and services intended to promote children's health and well-being, regardless of the child's characteristics ((race, ethnicity, nationality, age, abilities [physical, cognitive, learning], socioeconomic background, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, mental health, culture, religion, histories, developmental status/stage, political views and other aspects of human diversity). | X |
| 3.2 | Type of data collection:<br>a. survey questionnaire……..……..…..X<br>b. subject interview……..……..…..X<br>c. key informant interview (KII)……..……..…..X<br>d. focus group discussion (FGD)……..……..…..X<br>e. secondary document (desk) review……..……X<br>f. on-site observation…… | | X |

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| | g. case study……..<br>h. physical measurements ……..<br>i. biological specimen ……..……<br>j. other..…….. | | |
| 3.3 | Is the type of data collection appropriate for this study design? | Please explain the use of focus groups with beneficiaries.<br>Focus group discussions are one method that will be used in the evaluation. One advantage in using this method is that a wide range of attitudes, knowledge, and experiences can be captured in one group session including among participants in similar groupings. For example, one discussion is planned with all the subnational supervisors from MHDFIPA. It is envisaged that a range of opinions will be shared that offer valuable insights with regards to the same topic. This will help identify nuances and could be compared to quantitative data in the analysis phase, resulting in richer findings.<br><br>This method can also be more efficient than individual interviews with key informants as it will involve many people. To this end, two formats will be offered. For those participants who are able to travel to a central place and where finance is available to support travel, a face-to-face discussion will be held. For those participants who are unable to travel to a central place or where it is not financially feasible to travel, an online discussion will be facilitated. | **X** |
| 3.4 | Are secondary data (desk review including documents, reports, publications):<br>a. publicly available.....……X<br>b. not publicly available containing personally identifiable information (PII)……<br>c. not publicly available containing no PII.....……X | Please respond.<br>Most of them are publicly available. A few of them (Standard Operating Procedures) are in draft forms and are not currently publicly available. None of them contains personally identifiable information | **X** |
| 3.5 | Are types of data and variables in the secondary data set described? | | **X** |

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| 3.6 | Is how investigators' access to the secondary data described? | | **X** |
| 3.7 | If the secondary data contained subject records, did subjects consent to reuse of their data? | | **X** |
| 3.8 | Does study involve intervention, treatment, comparison, or control groups?<br>a. intervention……..……..……<br>b. comparison……<br>c. control……..<br>d. none……X | | **X** |
| 3.9 | Number of Data Collections:<br>a. one-time only……..……..……X<br>b. two or more (e.g., pre-post) …… | | **X** |
| 3.10 | Sample size: Approximate total *n* = 426 | Please provide an estimate for U-Report responses based upon prior experience and for the social worker survey.<br>200 estimated respondents, based on general U-Report survey uptake<br><br>Please provide estimated total sample size =<br>426 (126 through KIIs and FGDs; 200 through U-Report; 100 through online survey) | **X** |

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| 3.11 | Are any subjects children (<18 years old)?....12 – 17 yo<br>a. 0 – 2……..……..……..……<br>b. 3 – 7……<br>c. 8 – 12……..<br>d. 13 – 17……X | Why are ages 12 –to 17 years appropriate?<br>Maestral proposes the engagement of children aged 12-17 in the evaluation study. Children of this age group, typically at the developmental stage where they are able to think about and reflect on their past experiences, as well as express their views on the same (verbally or through written form). That is, children within this age group typically have a grasp of "narrative competence [which enables children of this age group to demonstrate the] capacity to understand the purpose of the interview and to participate in it". Also, research has shown that chronological age is a strong predictor of suggestibility, wherein suggestibility to false memory and misleading suggestions decrease with age. As such, children above the age of 12 are also less likely, when compared to their younger counterparts, to be susceptible to suggestibility and bringing forward scripts which may originate from places as cartoons, or stories [fiction or non-fiction] heard from others which are not their own) and inconsistencies in relaying their experiences of events. Overall, children aged 12-17 are better suited to meaningfully participate in interviews and focus group discussions, given their stage of cognitive, psychological, and social development. | **X** |
| 3.12 | Does study include the use of technologies (e.g., on-line data collection or intervention, *U-Report*)? U-Report | Yes, U-Report and Online Survey using SurveyMonkey | **X** |
| 3.13 | Additional comments or suggestions | | **X** |
| **Section 4** | ***Subject Risks:*** **Are risks reasonable in relation to any benefits to subjects and to the importance of knowledge that may be expected to result from the research?** | | |
| 4.1 | Is the research *Minimal Risk* Only?: This means the probability and magnitude of anticipated harm or discomfort is no greater than ordinarily encountered in | There is no anticipated risk. Any unanticipated risk will be minimal | **X** |

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| | daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological exams or tests. | | |
| 4.2 | Does the research involve *greater than minimal risk*, but where risks are justified by anticipated benefits; where the relation of the anticipated benefits to risks is at least as favorable as available alternative approaches; and where the intervention or procedure is likely to yield generalizable knowledge? If so, are mitigating procedures described? | No | **X** |
| 4.3 | Do study objectives show that risks are reasonable in relationship to expected gains and benefits are clearly articulated? | No such risk. There are no anticipated benefits to the participants, other than contributing to evaluating and shaping the Child Protection System of Belize. | **X** |
| 4.4 | By their participation, are subjects vulnerable to any of the following?:<br>a. physical risk …….<br>b. psychological risk ……..X<br>c. social risk ……..…….<br>d. economic risk ……..……..<br>e. legal risk …….…….<br>f. political risk ……..……..<br>g. employment risk……<br>h. academic risk…….....<br>i. religious risk……..…...<br>j. other……..<br>k. none…….. | Any employment risk to subjects like social workers or police officers possible?<br>There is a possibility of employment risk and psychological risk to subjects who will be engaged in the data collection phase. Employment risks may occur if statements made by social workers and police officers which are critical of the government may result in retaliation or loss of jobs. This is like to occur if respondents' responses are leaked or accessed due to poor data storage practices or protocols.<br>Regarding psychological risk, is likely to arise from these professionals recounting or reflecting on their close and frequent interactions with survivors of traumatic incidents such as abuse, exploitation and neglect.<br><br>Will you select caregiver and child subjects who are current or past recipients of child protective services?<br>Child subjects, who were past recipients of child protective services, from the ages of 12- 17 years will be engaged in the evaluation study. | **X** |
| 4.5 | In event of any of the above risks, do protocols describe clear strategies to mitigate risks? | Please describe mitigations for any risks in Item 4.4.<br>**Employment Risks Mitigation:** Data privacy and security will be maintained through our data management | **X** |

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| | | procedures, which includes secure storage and management of electronic data. Each respondent will be assigned a unique identification number so that their personal details can be removed from files before they are uploaded into secure storage. The consultancy team lead will also review interview notes and recordings to verify that personal details of respondents have been removed from files and take corrective measures if these details have not been excluded from files. All data will be uploaded to a secure server and permanently deleted from personal computers after approval of the final report. Data will be used exclusively for the purposes of this assessment.<br><br>**Psychological Risks Mitigation:** The consultant team has been trained on and will adhere to Maestral child protection and safeguarding policies and code of conduct. Importantly, the consultancy team has expertise with how to deal with disclosures of violence and how to mitigate further harm to participants. Respondents will be encouraged to contact the UNICEF PSEA focal or the relevant focal point within the government of Belize if there are disclosures. Also, research questions will be designed to be easily understood for all participants and will be adapted as needed to ensure appropriateness and understanding for all stakeholders regardless of age, educational status, ethnicity, etc. Lastly, all data collection will adhere to UNICEF's guidelines (as outlined in Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis). | |
| 4.6 | Does the study request information or opinions where public disclosure may result in danger, limitations to future freedoms, or access to services? | | X |

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| 4.7 | G | Please describe stratification of FGDs by age, gender and subject type. Will child subject or caregivers be mixed or same gender?<br>No stratification will be applied to focus group discussions for organisations. The criteria for attending these focus group discussions will be that participants are representatives of that particular organisation.or group (like Youth Group)<br>For focus group discussions involving children and their caregivers, Maestral will attempt to have an equal number of female and male child participants. Maestral does not believe that child participants in focus group discussions need to be segregated by gender so children, regardless of their gender, will be included in the same focus group discussion.<br><br>A separate focus group discussion will be conducted for caregivers to contribute their views using a different tool from that used with children. For both focus group discussions, views will be solicited on client satisfaction and service delivery gaps, the actual detail of the child protection case will not be discussed.<br><br>How old will child subjects in focus groups be?<br>As per 3.11 Maestral will target children aged 12-17 years old. | **X** |
| 4.8 | If a subject discloses or is suspected to be at risk outside the study, are procedures in place to address or report risk and refer subject for relevant support? | In your request for ethical review you state: "*Respondents will be encouraged to contact the UNICEF PSEA focal or the relevant focal point within the government of Belize if there are disclosures*." Who is the focal point and how will subjects be advised to contact them?<br>Focal Person for UNICEF will be Paulette Wade and her email address (pwade@unicef.org) will be the primary contact method | **X** |

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| | | The Director for Department of Human Services (Shawn Vargas) will be the focal point within the government and his email address (director.hsd@humandev.gov.bz) will be the primary contact method | |
| 4.9 | Is local reporting abuse of children mandatory? If yes, has consideration been given to the impacts and consequences of mandatory reporting? | Please state whether local reporting of child abuse is mandatory in Belize. If yes, describe the requirements for reporting, please provide the procedures to be used.<br>**Extract from the Families or Children Act (revised, 2003)**<br>Regulation 5.<br>It shall be the duty of any family member, teacher, social worker, school counsellor, employee of a certified children's institution (especially the Manager thereof), school administrator, principal and deputy principal of any educational institution, dean of a college, probation officer, police officer or any other employee or officer of the Government whose daily duties entails dealing regularly with children, to promptly report orally or in writing all incidents of suspected child abuse which comes to his knowledge and/or attention to the Belize Police Department or to the Department for investigation.<br><br>Regulation 6.<br>(1) Any person referred to in Regulations 4 and 5 above who fails to report a case of suspected child abuse which comes to his knowledge and/or attention, or who unduly delays in making such a report, or who fails to make such a report in the manner set forth in the aforesaid Regulations, commits an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment. | **X** |

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| | | (2) Any person referred to in Regulation 3 above who reports a case of suspected child abuse in good faith shall not be liable to any civil or criminal proceedings arising therefrom, and it shall be deemed that every person referred to in the said Regulation who reports a case of suspected child abuse does so in good faith.<br><br>Regulation 7.<br>Upon receipt of a report on an alleged incident of child abuse, the Department or the Belize Police Department, as the case may be, shall forthwith proceed to the home, establishment or other address where the alleged child victim is said to be, and conduct all such interviews as may be necessary to determine whether such child has suffered any child abuse, and also to assess the safety of the child and the need to place the child into protective custody.<br><br>Regulation 8<br>If the initial investigation carried out under Regulation 7 above discloses that the child has indeed suffered from child abuse, a member of the Belize Police Department, or a Social Services Practitioner, or such other person as the Minister may designate in writing, shall forthwith assess whether it is necessary to remove the child from the place where he is found and place him under protective custody to ensure his safety. | |
| 4.10 | Additional comments or suggestions | | X |
| **Section 5** | ***High Risk:*** **When subjects are vulnerable to heightened risk have additional safeguards been included to protect their rights and welfare?** | | |
| 5.1 | Can subjects be perceived as vulnerable, including: children, especially unaccompanied or separated (UASC); lacking WASH, food, shelter, or medical care; | | X |

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| | refugees in conflict or post conflict; those in natural, ecological, or disaster settings; mothers & pregnant women; forced migrants and illegal or undocumented immigrants; prisoners or persons in institutions including orphanages or juvenile justice systems; gang members; those with mental or physical illness or disability; those with HIV/AIDS; those at economic or educational disadvantage; persecuted minority groups, or under high familial, peer, or social pressure? If yes, are study-specific protection protocols provided? | | |
| 5.2 | Does the sampling strategy target people at risk for issues such as: violence, torture, abuse, kidnapping; sexual exploitation, harassment, prostitution or pornography, female genital mutilation or cutting, reproductive or sexual issues; sexual orientation; child, early or forced marriage; suicide? If yes, are study-specific protection protocols provided? | | X |
| 5.3 | Are subjects involved in any of the following: slavery, including the sale and trafficking of children; forced labour, servitude, forced recruitment to armed groups; war or armed conflict; illegal activities, production or trafficking of drugs; economic exploitation; work that could damage health or safety; removal of organs for exploitation? If yes, are study-specific protection protocols provided? | | X |
| 5.4 | Does the study request information relating to illegal activities? If yes, is an MOU in place with government to ensure that no participant is prosecuted? Have participants been notified of this agreement? | | X |
| 5.5 | Additional comments or suggestions | | X |
| **Section 6** | ***Recruitment:*** **Do submitted materials describe subjects and the recruitment process?** | | |
| 6.1 | To what extent are subjects identified:<br>a. names are recorded with responses…….<br>b. names recorded separate from responses……..X<br>c. no names are recorded ..…….…… | Why record names and PII of focus group and interview subjects?<br>In online and face to face focus group discussions or key informant interviews, no PII will be collected apart from | X |

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| | d. other PII is recorded……..……<br>e. no PII is recorded ……<br>f. subjects are given a unique identifier.....X<br>g. other……..…… | names. Participants will remain anonymous in recordings of the discussions or interviews. Their true identify will not be shared in reporting. Details of the participants will only be known to the Maestral evaluation team.<br><br>Will the online survey be administered to child protection officers and social workers using Survey Monkey collect any names or PII?<br>No PII will be requested in the online survey. We hope that in informing potential survey participants of their anonymity they will be more inclined to complete the survey and provide truthful answers.<br><br>No identifiers are collected with the U-Report survey, correct?<br>Correct. Maestral's understanding of the U-Report platform in Belize is that contributions are anonymous. | |
| 6.2 | If subject name or any other PII is recorded, are procedures included for how this info will be kept separate from responses? | If names and PII are stored with data in the field, when and by whom are they replaced with a unique identifier?<br>The allocation of a unique identifier will be carried out by a Maestral team member who participates as notetaker during focus group discussions or key informant interviews. The allocation will take place during the discussion or interview.<br>Who has access to the code linking the code to the names?<br>Only members of Maestral's team will have access to documentation showing the participants' real name and the unique identifier assigned to them. However, no PII will be linked to any quote or statement during focus group discussions or during analysis of data | **X** |
| 6.3 | Are subject recruitment procedures & sampling strategy adequately described? | Please provide inclusion and exclusion criteria of your sample for KIIs, FGDs, and surveys. | **X** |

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| | | The criteria to participate in KIIs or FGDs is the same regardless of what type of organisation or agency the participant is representing. Representatives of national ministries and government agencies, decentralised government agencies, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, international non governmental agencies, local CSOs and non government organisations and community level groups and organisations must have experience and knowledge of the child protection system in Belize in order to meaningfully participate.<br><br>Maeestral will not interview anyone with a traumatic experience and will not ask questions that will make a participant relive his or her traumatic experience.<br><br>How will beneficiary subjects be selected and recruited?<br>The criteria to participate in focus group discussions for child beneficiaries and their caregivers is that children are aged between 12 and 17 years old, and that they have received child protection services and/or been placed in residential care.<br>Maestral will rely on UNICEF,the evaluation Task Force and relevant government and non-government staff to identify a list of potential children to be invited to participate along with their caregivers. Consideration will be given to the age of the child when they received child protection services, the district in which they reside and their ethnicity. Maestral will target a cross section of child beneficiaries aged 12-17 with different ethnicity (including indigenous and migrant children) and gender markers. This will include targeting indigenous and migrant beneficiaries or those that live in isolated parts of Belize.<br><br>How will police and social work subjects be selected? | |

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| | | The Police and Social workers will be purposively sampled with the help of Government, UNICEF and the evaluation Task Force/TWG.<br><br>What are Youth Groups and how will subjects be selected from those for a focus group?<br>The Belize National Youth Development Policy defines a Youth as anyone between the ages of 15-29. Youth Groups represent identifiable body of youths who are collaborating with government and other stakeholders to promote child protection in Belize. Representatives of Youth Groups will be purposively sampled to participate in FGD. With the help of UNICEF and Government/Child Protection Officers.<br><br>What are the "Toledo Maya Women's Group" and "Toledo Alcaldes Association" and why were they selected as subjects? How will you select and recruit subjects from within these groups?<br>These organisations are CSOs that support vulnerable children and their families in the Toledo district of Belize. The Toledo province has a diverse population with many migrant families that engage with the child protection sector. Therefore these organisations have been selected to participate in a combined focus group discussion in order to solicit their combined views on engagement with the child protection system.These organisations will be invited to send representatives to for a focus group discussion. | |
| 6.4 | Do recruitment procedures clearly describe ways and means to ensure privacy of subjects throughout the recruitment process? | Please describe privacy of subjects throughout the recruitment process.<br>Maestral team are committed to conducting research recruitment, in close collaboration with UNICEF Belize, equitably, without disadvantaging or advantaging a particular group(s), communities or individuals. Target | **X** |

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| | | research subjects (youth groups, former beneficiaries of social work interventions, etc.) will not be excluded or included based on characteristics without the necessary scientific justification. Also, special efforts have been made to recruit hard to reach populations who may not be exposed to traditional recruitment procedures.<br><br>Recruitment processes and procedures will be designed to ensure the privacy of research subjects in the following ways:<br><br>• The team has carefully considered how to approach an individual or child, within the appropriate circumstances and setting where participants might be safely contacted.<br>• Team will develop a data collection plan in conjunction with UNICEF, Belize, wherein all information to be collected will be limited to data that is essential for research purposes,<br>• The Maestral team, in the recruitment phase will not have an active role in recruiting minors to participate in the study.<br>• Recruitment of minors will be the responsibility of UNICEF and Belize government stakeholders, based on the criteria of having been past recipients of child protective services to seek their interest and informed consent to participate in the study.<br>• Thereafter, personal identifiers from the contact lists developed by UNICEF and Belize government counterparts, will be replaced with Unique ID codes to ensure that information collected cannot be linked back to the research subject as the source of said information.<br>• Once these unique codes are generated, they will be shared with the research team for the sole | |

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| | | purpose of disseminating the U-Report survey and inviting minors to participate in focus group discussions (FGDs will be facilitated with the support of a UNICEF or Belize Government counterpart as per Maestral Child Safeguarding policy)<br>• Contact lists, recruitment records and other documents containing personal identifiers will be destroyed when they are no longer required for the research<br>• Access to master code lists or key codes will be limited to designated investigators<br>• Any electronic data received will be stored in password protected computer or files<br>• Assent and informed consent forms will be stored securely in locked locations or password protected files | |
| 6.5 | If subjects are children or other vulnerable groups, are materials (e.g.: survey instruments, focus group topics, etc.) age appropriate? | Please provide a focus group guide for child subjects.<br>A focus group guide has been attached to the document, found in the Informed Consent Sub-Folder in the attached Supporting Document folder. | **X** |
| 6.6 | If subjects are children or other vulnerable groups, or if subject matter is sensitive, is recruitment sensitive to subjects' potential vulnerabilities (real or perceived) and does it ensure privacy throughout recruitment? | Please describe.<br>Please see sections 6.4 and 8.6 for further details on how recruitment will be sensitive to subject's potential vulnerabilities and measures to ensure privacy throughout all stages of the study. | **X** |
| 6.7 | Do recruitment procedures show indication of bribery, coercion, intimidation, compulsion, pressure, or force? | Please respond.<br>No | **X** |
| 6.8 | Is recruitment of some members of the population and not others likely to result in resentment for either inclusion or exclusion? Have strategies to address this been adequately described? | Please respond.<br>Recruitment is purposive and will be based on role of institutions in the child protection system. Children and caregivers will be recruited with the help of government | **X** |

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| | | and non-government staff and it is expected that the absence of material benefits will make resentment unlikely | |
| 6.9 | Are potential subjects likely to conflate participation with potential or actual goods or service provision? Have strategies to address this been adequately described? | No, the informed consent indicates there will be no such benefits and participants will be informed and will consent before the interview commences. | **X** |
| 6.10 | If subjects are paid, compensated, provided a gift, or provided other benefits or services for participation, is the incentive described and justified as non-coercive?<br>a. cash or gift card……..<br>b. refreshment……..<br>c. travel cost…….<br>d. phone or internet credit……..<br>e. small gift……<br>f. other……..<br>g. none……..X<br>h. no response…….. | | **X** |
| 6.11 | Additional comments or suggestions | | **X** |
| **Section 7** | ***Informed Consent:*** **IC is a negotiation whereby subjects are informed about the study and their rights, and they agree to participate voluntarily. IC must be sought from each subject or the subject's authorized representative confirming this process.** | | |
| 7.1 | Type of Informed Consent:<br>a. written & signed ……..……X<br>b. written not signed …….<br>c. written & signed by authorized representative....<br>d. written with online checkbox……..……X<br>e. verbal & signed or recorded……..X<br>f. verbal & signed by authorized representative….X<br>g. verbal not signed or recorded……..…….<br>h. active……X<br>i. passive……..<br>j. other …… | You provided one informed consent document that provides for the interviewer to record consent. Please also provide a space for signed subject consent.<br>As attached, there are different informed consent forms for FGD, KIIs, Surveys<br><br>Also please see Item 7.16 below. | **X** |

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| 7.2 | Are the processes for obtaining each IC adequately described? | Please explain when you will use signed consent verses verbal consent.<br>Verbal consent will be provided during online KIIs and FGDs. In addition to these verbal consents, participants will indicate their consent by typing the consent in the chat box (Zoom, Teams and WhatsApp will be used for online interviews). | |
| 7.3 | Does the IC include a clear and simple invitation to participate, an explanation of what the subject will be expected to do, and why they are being recruited? | | X |
| 7.4 | Does IC include the purpose of the research presented in simple, age, education, and culturally appropriate local language? | | X |
| 7.5 | Does IC state that participation is voluntary, and subject may choose to not respond to any or all questions or may withdraw anytime without consequences? | Please include for beneficiaries that participation or refusal it will not impact any befits or services they receive.<br><br>For NGOs CSOs, Social workers, etc., please include that participation will not impact funding or employment.<br>Maestral respect the self-determination rights of all research subjects and stakeholders of all ages and backgrounds. For NGOs, CSOs, Social Workers and other relevant stakeholders, they have the right to voluntarily choose whether or not to participate in research. The study's Informed consent procedures explicitly states that there are protections against adverse consequences of declining or withdrawing from participating in the evaluation study. Additionally, research subjects will be informed about policies on whether or not data from participants who withdrew from the study will or will not be included in data analysis. | X |
| 7.6 | Does IC include the expected duration of the subject's participation (hours/minutes)? | Please include on all ICs.<br>ICs include expected duration of participation | X |

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| 7.7 | Are subjects given a clear indication of who will have access to their responses and in what form? | | X |
| 7.8 | Are subjects given a clear description of potential re-use or sharing of data, with whom, and in what form? | | X |
| 7.9 | Does IC include a description of any risks or benefits to subjects? | | X |
| 7.10 | Does IC include a statement describing how confidentiality (or anonymity) will be maintained, and if there are any limitations to confidentiality? | | X |
| 7.11 | Does IC provide identity and contact info of investigators? Is the form of contact useful and appropriate given power dynamics and access to resources like phones or email? | Please include your contact information in each IC.<br>Contact information included in all ICs<br>. | X |
| 7.12 | For child subjects, is IC being obtained from parent, guardian, caregiver, or authorized representative? If not, is a justification provided for why this is unnecessary? | Please provide separate parental consent for data collection with children.<br>Attached as part of Informed Consents in the Supporting Document folder<br><br>Will you obtain parental consent for the U-Report survey?<br>UNICEF administers U-Report and they will use their safeguarding processes | X |
| 7.13 | For child subjects, is their role in the study described adequately and in an age and culturally appropriate manner for them to provide written or verbal *assent*? | Please provide an age appropriate child assent for all types of data collection with children.<br>Please see the attached draft assent forms (in the Informed Consent sub-folder of the Supporting Documents folder. | X |
| 7.14 | Do IC materials advise subjects to keep focus group discussions (FGD) confidential from anyone outside the group? | Please include in ICs for FGDs.<br>**Done** | X |
| 7.15 | Where subjects differ by type (e.g.: age, sex, risk, status, etc.), are IC documents specific for each type? | | X |

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| 7.16 | Where data collection differs by method (e.g.: survey, FGD, interview, audio recording), do ICs cover each method? | Please provide separate consent forms to cover surveys, FGDs, and KIIs.<br>Different ICs provided for surveys, FGDs and KIIs (kindly find attached the Informed Consent sub-folder in the Supporting Documents folder. | X |
| 7.17 | If IC is written, is a copy left with subjects or there is explanation for not doing so? | Please confirm a copy will be provided.<br>Discussions with UNICEF and Government can be done and if it is helpful, a copy of the signed informed consent will be provided. However, not all participants (online participants) will have a signed informed consent | X |
| 7.18 | Additional comments or suggestions | | X |
| **Section 8** | ***Subject Protections:*** **Do submitted materials clearly identify protection against risk?** | | |
| 8.1 | Do materials describe protocols for subjects' safety throughout data collection, analysis, storage, and dissemination? | Your focus group guides begin with a table to fill out with subject names and other PII.<br><br>1. Please explain why you need to collect this data.<br><br>2. Please describe how and by whom this table will be completed to protect the identity and confidentiality of each subject.<br>During analysis, the data on gender and age will enrich findings of the evaluation and aligns with the TOR which encourages the evaluators to consider gender issues in the evaluation and analysis of information<br><br>The allocation of a unique identifier will be carried out by a Maestral team member who participates as notetaker during focus group discussions or key informant interviews. The allocation will take place during the discussion or interview.<br><br>Only members of Maestral's team will have access to documentation showing the participants' real name and | X |

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| | | the unique identifier assigned to them. However, no PII will be linked to any quote or statement during focus group discussions or during analysis of data<br><br>Participants will remain anonymous in recordings of the discussions or interviews. Their true identify will not be shared in reporting. Details of the participants will only be known to the Maestral evaluation team. | |
| 8.2 | Are all data collected necessary for the purposes of evidence generation? | | X |
| 8.3 | Do data analysis and reporting procedures ensure subject confidentiality (or anonymity) and security? | | X |
| 8.4 | If future contact with subjects is planned, does it provide for confidentiality and data security through the research period and beyond? | | X |
| 8.5 | Are backgrounds and qualifications of data collectors adequately described? | Please describe.<br>The data collection team consists of four members; three female members and one male member. All four data collectors are experienced in collecting data using online or face to face methods.<br><br>Emmanuel Antwi-Boasiako has extensive research and evaluation experience, working in various teams as an international consultant in the assessment of organisational capacities or in evaluating various development interventions in child protection, health, education, agriculture and poverty reduction. As a result he has experience in key informant interviewing and conducting focus group discussions.<br><br>Diana Shaw has conducted extensive research in Belize including earlier evaluations of the child protection system in Belize and supported legal and institutional reforms for the main institutions of the child protection system. From this research experience she has gained | X |

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| | | skills in key informant interviewing and conducting focus group discussions.<br><br>Peta Gaye Bookall has over 12 years technical expertise in Child Protection in which she has also gained skills in the co-facilitation of focus group discussions and in key informant interviewing.<br>Danica Waiti has over twenty years of experience in research and evaluation. She has led or supported more than 20 evaluations in 12 countries where she has gained considerable experience in data collection techniques including key informant interviewing, conducting focus group discussions and designing and managing online surveys.<br><br>Will you use female data collectors for female subjects?<br>Yes There are three female members of the data collection team who can be called upon to engage with female subjects. | |
| 8.6 | Have personnel collecting data from subjects, especially child subjects, had ethical training specific to the target group? | Please describe ethics training for those who will collect data from child subjects.<br>Maestral Team members have completed Maestral's child protection and safeguarding policies, code of conduct and associated trainings, inclusive of ethical training in their capacities as independent consultants and social service workers.<br>Ethical training focused on the following areas such as:<br>• **Maximizing Benefits and Minimizing Harm:** Team members are well versed in research design, implementation and disseminating studies that focus on maximizing scientific, societal and individual research benefits simultaneously, as much as possible, avoiding, minimizing and removing research harms to research subjects. The team is also aware of the socio-political | **X** |

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| | | context in Belize and will take additional steps to ensure the safety of all research subjects, and especially those who are vulnerable (victims of abuse, persons with vulnerable legal status, persons in contact with the criminal justice system, etc.)<br>• **Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples:** Team members have been trained on the importance and ways to promote the inherent worth of all human beings irrespective of their differences (race, ethnicity, nationality, age, abilities [physical, cognitive, learning], socioeconomic background, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, mental health, culture, religion, histories, developmental status/stage, political views and other aspects of human diversity). The team promotes the protection of privacy, confidentiality and right to self-determination for all research subjects they interact with.<br>• **Equity:** The team will conduct our study in a manner designed to promote fairness and justice for all individuals, regardless of the individuals' or groups' characteristics (listed above). The team will put measures in place throughout the course of our study (design, implementation, analysis etc.) to ensure that diverse individuals and populations have equal access to participate in the research.<br>• **Scientific Integrity:** The team has knowledge and expertise in fostering the relationships of trust throughout the course of the study. Additionally, the research team recognizes that there are implicit or explicit power dynamics between investigators and research subjects. The success of studies such as this evaluation is dependent on | |

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| | | research subjects' and other stakeholders' confidence and belief in the reliability, honesty, competence and trustworthiness of the data collectors. The team also demonstrates core values of openness, objectivity, fairness, honesty, accountability and responsible management and stewardship at every stage of the evaluation study.<br>• **Informed Consent:** Team is well versed in this area, including thought not limited to developmentally, appropriate child assent procedures, requirements of parent/caregiver/guardian permission when conducting research with minors, requirement for waiver of parent/caregiver/guardian permission under special circumstances (such as informing the parent/caregiver/guardian of child's participation in the study may potentially risk the child's safety); voluntarily choosing to participate in the study, and seeking support from legal guardians for those individuals who may have diminished autonomy and vulnerabilities when seeking informed consent. | |
| 8.7 | Are personnel collecting data aware of ethical issues that may arise and provided mitigation strategies? | | **X** |
| 8.8 | Additional comments or suggestions | Who will be conducting KIIs and focus groups (in-person and remote)?<br>The four aforementioned team of data collectors<br>**Danica Waiti**<br>**Diana Shaw**<br>**Peta-Gaye Bookall**<br>**Emmanuel Wireko Antwi-Boasiako** | **X** |

| Section 9 | ***Data Protections:*** **Do data collection and storage protocols adequately ensure subject & data safety?** | | |
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| 9.1 | Are data collection tools appropriate and constructed to assure subject confidentiality or anonymity? | Where are names and PII recorded and stored during data collection?<br>In Maestral's safe online repository, accessible by only the evaluation team and permanently deleted after the evaluation report is completed.<br><br>Will you record video during online data collection?<br>No<br><br>Will you mask subject identities during remote data collection?<br>Yes | **X** |
| 9.2 | Do data collection procedures and environment ensure data security? | Where will in-person interviews and focus groups take place?<br>Depending on what is convenient for the participants, it could be in a safe space in the house/community (for caregivers and children) and in offices of sampled institutions<br><br>What tools will you use for remote data collection?<br>Developed interview guides and survey monke for online surveys | **X** |
| 9.3 | Do procedures cover all data types (e.g., written, audio, video, observation), and are protections described for each type? | | **X** |
| 9.4 | If data will be shared with partners, is there a clear agreement or NDA? | | **X** |
| 9.5 | Do protocols describe chain of custody of data and protections for data transfer or transmission, management, and de-identification? | Please describe for storage in the field and transmission.<br>Interviews will be audio recorded if consent is given by respondents. In the case of virtual data collection, most teleconferencing allows for video and audio recording, but respondents will have the option to turn off their | **X** |

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| | | video. In the case of telephone interviews, audio recordings will be done when possible. All recordings will only be used by the data collection team to refine their notes. All respondents will be able to opt out of the recording without consequence.<br><br>The tools will be coded with a unique identification number that is linked to the participant, so that once the study is complete, none of the research information can be linked back to any participant.<br><br>All interview notes will be taken in Microsoft Word and cross-checked for removal of respondent names prior to uploading to Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis software.<br><br>Soft copies of notes without respondent's personal identifiers will be maintained by the analysis team during the study, then securely transferred to Maestral's data storage after the study is complete. After transferred to Maestral's data storage, all consultants will permanently delete all interview notes from their personal computers.<br><br>After the completion of the study, all in-country data collectors with access to the database that links ID Numbers to personal information will permanently destroy the files. | |
| 9.6 | Do protocols state length of retention and destruction of raw data (months, years)?<br>a. destroyed at end of study……..……X<br>b. destroyed after three years……<br>c. retained indefinitely……<br>d. other……..<br>e. NR | Please respond for all types of data.<br>**Raw data will be destroyed as soon as the final evaluation report is validated and approved.** | **X** |
| 9.7 | Additional comments or suggestions | | **X** |