External evaluation of the Operational Surge support provided by the Global WASH Cluster (GWC) Field Support Team (FST) to National (WASH) Coordination Platforms (NCPs): lessons learnt and perspectives on contributing to achieving Strategic Objective 1 of the GWC Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Introduction

The project *"Operational and surge support for crisis-affected National Humanitarian WASH Coordination Platforms (NCPs) through the Global WASH Cluster's (GWC) Field Support Team (FST) Project 5"*, referred to as BHA Grant 5, is a 24 month project, started on November, 1, 2021 and ending on October 31, 2023.

As per BHA procedures, an external evaluation is required[1]:

1. If the project has a period of performance of 18 months or longer; or
2. If the organization has implemented at least one BHA-funded award in the application country in the past three years but has not evaluated a BHA-funded award in the application country in the past three years.

General Background

The Field Support Team operates under a consortium model, that has OXFAM, iMMAP[2], NCA[3], IMPACT/REACH and ACF as members. ACF[4] is the consortium lead, with a dedicated Project Manager, working in close coordination with the Global WASH Cluster CAST.

The FST operates within the GWC framework of Operational Support, providing operational support to WASH coordination platforms (cluster or other) by:

1. Ensuring availability of a team and systems to permit surge deployment and remote surge support of NCPs;
2. Direct surge support to WASH NCPs through in person/virtual deployments;
3. Remote surge support to WASH NCPs for task-based requests to the Helpdesk;
4. Global operational support on Core Functions of Coordination (as defined by IASC), humanitarian program cycle support, cluster performance monitoring and capacity building.

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[1] Please refer to: BHA USAID Common Requirements, page 66, https://docs.google.com/document/d/159LnigLpzXKZk5dzzOY4Q-cfNE3ZGV_TlidN2537pPw/edit

[2] iMMAP left the Consortium as of July 15, 2023.

[3] NCA will leave the consortium as of October 31, 2023.

[4] The FST project is implemented by Action contre la Faim (ACF) as project manager

The Global WASH Cluster Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 is structured around three Strategic Objectives (SO)[5]. The FST is mainly contributing to the SO n. 1: Coordination: The GWC will recalibrate its focus to support NCPs for the delivery of 6+1 core functions. In an environment of increasingly complex emergencies, there is a greater need than ever for effective & accountable humanitarian WASH coordination.

1 - Evaluation purpose

The primary purposes of the FST project are threefold:
   i)   To ensure the continuity of coordination in emergencies and humanitarian crises;
   ii)   To establish coordination mechanisms in new crises; and
   iii)   To strengthen the NCP capacities and partner awareness of coordination systems and resources.

This is achieved through:
   i)   Country-based (in person and/or virtual) deployments,
   ii)   Remote support on country-specific and thematic issues, including helpdesk mechanism,
   iii)   Refinement of global guidance, approaches, methodologies and tools, specifically in reference to the core areas of the FST (Coordination, Information Management and Assessment).

The purpose of the External Evaluation (EE) is to evaluate in a transparent and accountable way the performance of the FST project (as funded by BHA) to achieve the 3 primary aims of the FST, and produce recommendations for the future of the FST.

2 - Evaluation Type

The evaluation will mainly provide evidence on the project effect/ impact. For each aim, the EE is expected to be able to:
   i.   Identify where and how the aim has been achieved (or not);
   ii.   If one or more aims have not been achieved, identify how, when and why; and
   iii. Based on the points i. and ii. above, as well as recommendations from the past that apply to the current contract, provide recommendations on how to change the FST in order to make it better at achieving those aims.

The evaluation principles, methods and design will include impartiality, independence, usefulness and credibility.

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[5] SO 2. Localization: The GWC is committed to effective and accountable humanitarian WASH coordination and the need for active participation, meaningful representation, and decisive leadership by local and national actors. This includes improving preparedness, anticipatory action, response, monitoring and transition phases, by supporting local and national actors, with a diverse range of stakeholders - from public and private partners and civil society
SO 3. Collaboration: Complex humanitarian crises require collaboration, synergy and complementarity with key sectoral strategies and frameworks to ensure a joint approach to collective action. At all levels, creating cooperation across the humanitarian, development and peace sectors and with a diverse range of stakeholders – from local and national actors to public and private partners and civil society – is critical to ensure effective and accountable coordination of humanitarian crises and to foster innovation.

3 - Evaluation questions

Important: Evaluation questions should apply and analyze to the three types of NCP support proposed by FST: deployment, remote support and global support cf. section 1. Evaluation purpose.

i. **Ensuring availability of a team and systems to permit surge deployment and remote surge support of NCPs**
   - Preparedness of the surge support team (CC, AS, IM) including, position types, recruitment, orientation, training of surge team
   - Appropriate management systems and operating procedures for deployment
   - Tools, guidance and resources

ii. **To ensure the continuity of coordination in emergencies and humanitarian crisis;**
   - **Effectiveness**: Did the FST deployments and/or remote support improve the NCP over the Core Coordination functions, based on BHA5 deployments DET and Key Informants interviews. Which functions where the most in need of support, and the most supported by the FST project? What was the relative weight (duration, effectiveness) of Deployments / Remote support during BHA5?
   - **Efficiency** : Following the request of surge support, has the deployment been timely[6]?
   - **Sustainability :** Was the NCP able to sustain the coordination at the end of the FST deployment (e.g. processes/plans were followed up, tools set-up by the FST continued being used, coordination meetings continued to take place…)? At the end of the deployment, was a person (someone within the NCP, a UNICEF personnel, UNICEF stand-by partner, or someone else determined by UNICEF who has the capacity to take on the role that the FST member filled) identified to take over from the FST resource with little or no gap in-between?

iii. **To establish coordination mechanisms in new crises;**
   - **Effectiveness :** Has the deployed FST been able, during the 2 to 3 months of a deployment, to establish an active and participatory coordination platform? Has the deployment helped to give the necessary guidance to WASH cluster/sector partners, around the humanitarian WASH response?
   - **Coherence :** Was the newly implemented coordination mechanism able to integrate its efforts with the current existing coordination structures, such as the local government?

iv. **To strengthen the NCP capacities and partner awareness of coordination systems and resources**
   - **Efficiency :** What was the relative weight (duration, main outputs, effectiveness) of Global support /Deployments and Remote support during BHA5?
   - **Relevance, sustainability :** Has the FST deployment been able, especially through global support, to strengthen the awareness of and participation in the WASH cluster/sector coordination among WASH partners? Has the FST deployment been able to strengthen the awareness around and use of one or more coordination tools (especially 3W, 4W and 5W, presence maps, etc.)? Have the partners been made aware about the existence of coordination related opportunities such as workshops, training, opportunities to access funding?

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[6] Timely: for acute and sudden emergencies, virtual and/or in person support is provided within 72h from the request; for other requests, support is provided as closely as possible to the requested start date, as per the original CO request (see FST phase 5 proposal and indicators)

4 - Evaluation methods

The external evaluator(s) is/are expected to use quantitative and qualitative and/or mixed methods. The consultant that will compete for this call is requested to submit the detailed methodology of the evaluation for review and approval before beginning the evaluation. The evaluation will be a combination of external surveys/reviews on several NCPs and key informants supported (deployment, remote support, global support) by the FST during the BHA5 program.

5 - Evaluation timeline

An evaluation committee (EC) will be established to steer the process. This committee will include a member of the GWC SAG, one member from CAST and one from the Consortium (around 5 persons).The key expected EE milestones are designed as follows:

1. **Week 1 & 2** : Desk review, proposal of the evaluation methodology, work plan and evaluation tools: the results should be presented to the FST PM to be shared with the EC for agreement : (1st touch point with the evaluation committee).

2. **Week 3 & 4 :** The evaluator/evaluation team to conduct several targeted surveys (semi-structured interviews) for WASH NCP CCs, WASH NCP IMs, GWC CAST and SAG, other FST member & NCP stakeholders in order to inform a detailed evaluation methodology (definition of the KIIs/FGDs, questionnaires, etc.). Presentation of the targeted survey's findings to the EC and presentation of the methodology (2nd touch point with the evaluation committee).

3. **Weeks 5/6/7 :** Implementation of KIIs (WASH NCPs Cluster Coordinators lead and co-leads, National IMs, FST PM, CAST, FST donor(s), Supervisors of the CCs in locations where FST made a lot of work, another Cluster e.g. FSL or CCCM, etc) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): FST team members, FST steering Committee, Global WASH Cluster members on their perception and knowledge of the FST, National cluster members, etc. (not exhaustive list)

4. **Week 8** : Presentation of preliminary results of the KIIs/FGDs (3rd touch point with the evaluation committee).

5. **Week 9** : Presentation of the findings to the FST Consortium partners, CAST, BHA and FST team members and Steering Committee.

6. **Week 10** : Submission of the draft final report to the evaluation committee (the evaluation committee will be granted 5 working days for comments).

7. **Week 12** : Submission to the FST PM of the final report and presentation of the results.

6 - Evaluation findings dissemination

The findings of the evaluation will be presented, as follows:

i. **By the evaluator/evaluation team**:
- In the form of on-line meeting (1 hour approx.) to the evaluation committee, BHA, FST Steering Committee/Consortium Members, GFFO and to the stakeholders engaged in the EE; and
- In the form of an EE "package", including final report, PowerPoint presentations, methodology definition, tools developed, work plan and other relevant documents will be shared to the FST PM. The FST PM will share it to the evaluation committee, BHA, FST Steering

Committee/Consortium Members (the submission of the final report to BHA should happen within 90 days after the period of performance ends).

ii. **By the FST PM**: the final report will be shared to the evaluation committee, BHA, FST Steering Committee/Consortium Members, GFFO and to the stakeholders engaged in the EE.

7 - Evaluator profile

The evaluation team will have and demonstrate the following expertise and skills:
- Extensive evaluation experience in humanitarian approaches and programs, especially in the area of Cluster coordination and emergency response;
- In-depth knowledge of the humanitarian reform process and its Transformative Agenda;
- Extensive technical and practical organizational development expertise and leadership;
- Proven experience & institutional knowledge of UN & NGOs, at headquarters & field locations;
- Proven expertise in facilitating participatory workshops for similar organizations, involving a range of participants from field and headquarters;
- Extensive experience in leading similar exercises, including experience in country case studies and real-time approaches;
- Excellent writing and communication skills in English; excellent communication skills in French; communication skills in Spanish considered an advantage;
- Extensive experience conveying complex evaluation analyses clearly and compellingly, including through the use of clear graphics and visual media;
- Previous experience evaluating BHA-funded projects is considered as an advantage.

8 - Reference period

The evaluation will consider the project timeframe from the start of BHA 5 (November 1st, 2021) up to the day when the consultancy starts/signature of the contract.

9 – Expected outputs

The evaluators will be paid on the presentation of:
   i) A detailed evaluation design
   ii) A final evaluation report including a summary and a recommendation section
   iii) A presentation of the results to the project stakeholders (ACF, CAST, BHA, FST staff)

10 - Key references

   1. IASC module for HPC/ IASC reference module
   2. GWC Strategic Plan 2022-2025
   3. Operational Support Resources (internal link, to be shared once the evaluator is identified)
   4. GWC Humanitarian Response Dashboard 2023
   5. BHA proposal/Grant 5
   6. GFFO proposal/Grant 1
   7. Evaluation of the Field Support Team – final report – December 2018
   8. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet), 01/02/2010: link here

The above list is not exhaustive.

10 - List of acronyms

BHA: Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (within US Agency for International Development)
CAST: Cluster Advocacy and Support Team
CTK : GWC Coordination Tool Kit
EC: Emergency Coordinator
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
FST: Field Support Team
GFFO: German Federal Foreign Office
GWC : Global WASH Cluster
IASC : Inter Agency Standing Committee
KII: Key Informant Interview
PM : Project Manager
NCPs : National Cluster Platforms
MRI: Minimum Requirement Interviews
SC : Steering Committee (FST project)
SOP: Standard Operating Procedures
SOW: Scope of Work