



NOTICE OF INTEREST CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Final External Project Evaluation

LEARN Consortium Linking Emergency Assistance and Response in Northeast Syria (LEARN)

Date : 23/7/2020

Project : LEARN Consortium OFDA Funded

Title : Consultancy for Final External Project Evaluation-LEARN Consortium

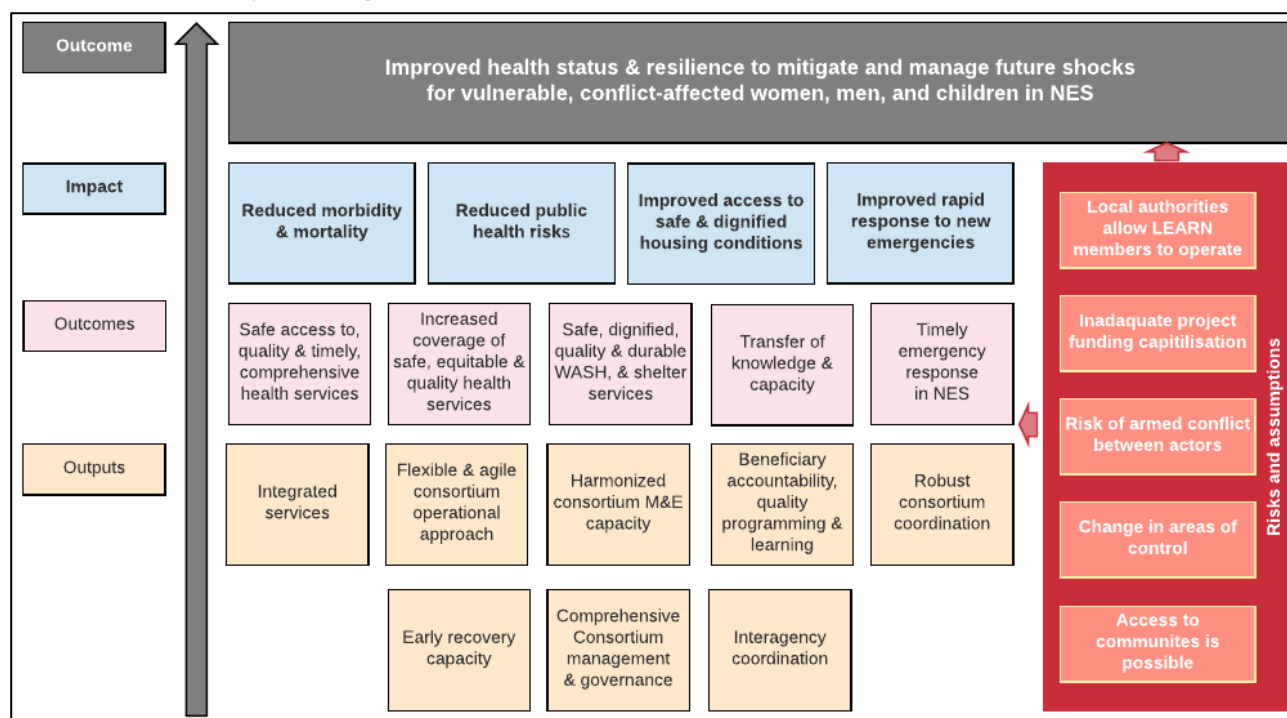
Reference : [AMM/IM/003/AMM/20](#)

This Expression of Interest solicitation is open to all eligible consultants, in accordance with SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL procedures.

1. Description of Project

The LEARN Consortium is a partnership between four (4) International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). A two-year program (10/2018 – 9/2020) funded through a Cooperative Agreement by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), it leverages the respective expertise from the four implementing partners to deliver Health, Shelter and WASH services to Internally Displaced Persons and other vulnerable people in North-East Syria (NES). The main activities being implemented are related to the rehabilitation and running of Primary Health Centers (PHCs), emergency WASH (water distribution and rehabilitation of water infrastructure), private shelter repairs and distribution of essential kits (new arrivals, hygiene, shelter, winterization; in-kind or through cash-for-kits). The program incorporates a Rapid Response Mechanism and protection is mainstreamed throughout. LEARN's aim is an integrated and harmonized, multi-sectoral approach which addresses the needs of 540,000 of the most vulnerable conflict-affected men, women and children across NES. The four implementing partners are based in NES, Erbil and Amman, and implement throughout NES. The Consortium Management Unit (CMU) is the oversight structure for the program that aims to facilitate smooth coordination, oversee program delivery, lead donor communications, ensure compliance and manage risk.

LEARN Theory of Change:



2. Background

In early 2019, Northeast Syria (NES) witnessed a steady decline in conflict activity since the group known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was expelled from the region. This decline in conflict activity has led residents who had previously been displaced to return to their communities of origin. At the same time, the governorates of Ar-Raqqa, eastern Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh continued to host a large number of IDP populations. Residents of NES faced a new humanitarian crisis after the escalation of conflict in October 2019; this resulted in significant displacement from the region, both internally and towards the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KR-I). More than 190,000 women, children and men were displaced, mostly from Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa. Critical infrastructure, including health and water treatment facilities, was damaged or closed. Since mid-December 2019 conflict has continued at a reduced level in comparison to October/early November. Most recently, public health measures have been put in place in NES to mitigate widespread infection due to COVID-19. With poor health infrastructure, lack of basic services, densely crowded camp and collective center populations, and a population that after years of war may have many undiagnosed underlying health conditions, the effect of COVID-19 is likely to be severe in NES. Partners' ability to deliver programming may be strongly impacted by the evolving context, including possible supply chain and money transfer system ruptures, plus curfew and other movement limitations which are likely to become increasingly restrictive. LEARN activities now include preparedness and response to COVID-19, and LEARN's operational model and activities will continue to adapt as the global pandemic continues.

These events have shifted the operational reality in North East Syria. While LEARN consortium continued to assist the affected population through standard program activities as well as rapid emergency response, there were access limitations and implementation was managed and monitored remotely. The program monitoring is based on a set of standard OFDA sector output and outcome level indicators (WASH, Shelter, Health/Nutrition) and incorporates measurement of beneficiaries' safety and dignity when accessing assistance. Monitoring data are routinely collected by implementing partners and analyzed in semi-annual reports. Feedback and complaint response mechanism is established and managed by partners in all program locations. Three third-party monitoring activities, all commissioned

by the donor, were conducted on various program components (operation of health facilities, kits' distributions, water infrastructure rehabilitation) in Deir-ez-Zor, Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa governorates

3. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the overall success of project outcomes, measuring the effectiveness of partner-specific as well as integrated interventions. The evaluation findings will be disseminated for use by the LEARN partner organizations, the donor and other relevant stakeholders such as working groups, local authorities and communities.

The objectives of the External Evaluation are:

1. to assess program's effects on direct beneficiaries
2. to identify key aspects of consortium effectiveness
3. to draw lessons and provide actionable recommendations for follow-on LEARN intervention

Scope: The evaluation will assess all components of the project in all areas of intervention (Deir-ez-Zor, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh governorates). Specific geographic coverage and locations will however be identified based on security and access considerations. Differentiation between results in different implementation areas for similar activities and modalities should be captured. The evaluation study will look at the period of program performance, i.e. October 2018 – September 2020. Special attention should be paid to protection mainstreaming and gender sensitive approaches (specifically inclusion and access of women to all project activities).

4. Key Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions represent the broad scope of the final evaluation. The questions will be further discussed and reviewed in cooperation with the selected evaluation consultant.

1. Have the project strategy/approaches adapted well to the changing context and needs of target beneficiaries and stakeholders? How well has the consortium worked with local institutions?
2. What needs of the affected population have been best or least met? What are the most significant changes, positive or negative, identified by beneficiaries and local stakeholders?
3. Does an integrated program help improve beneficiaries' health and hygiene practices, quality of life?
4. Did different groups of beneficiaries feel safe and treated with dignity when accessing services/assistance provided or supported by LEARN? Did the intervention do any harm?
5. How did LEARN leverage consortium for improved effectiveness and efficiency (e.g. in logistics, procurement, BOQs, information management, accountability, RRM)?

5. Methods

Primary approach is to choose methods that suit conditions on the ground and provide flexibility for evaluators to change methods based on changing context and access. In the absence of a rigorously defined counterfactual that would be needed for evaluation on impact, the final evaluation will be conducted as performance evaluation using qualitative methods: document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and direct observations. Quantitative data collected in the course of routine monitoring and endline data collected by the partners should be incorporated into the analysis. The evaluation will make use of before-after comparisons especially for assessing the improvement of practices related hygiene promotion, reproductive and maternal health, nutrition practices and living conditions.

The methodological approach will be outlined by the evaluator in the evaluation proposal – indicating expected scope regarding locations and interviews – and refined in detail in the inception report. While proposing the methods for data collection, consultant(s) needs to consider the COVID-19 related situation. The proposed data collection methods should be to a maximum extent statistically representative, but the safety of both enumerators and respondents is a priority consideration. Given the uncertainties while accessing the project areas for non-locals, consulting team must include local staff and design the tools for remote data collection where required.

Document Review

- Relevant secondary literature, such as working groups or other agency reports
- Project documents – such as proposal, budget, etc.
- Project MEAL documents and data – baseline, endline, internal monitoring, third-party monitoring and progress reports, Indicator Tracking Tables

Primary Data Collection

- Key informant interviews with CMU and project staff of each partner
- Key informant interviews with beneficiary representatives, local officials, medical staff, WASH authorities, other local stakeholders
- Focus group discussions with project beneficiaries (identified distinctly for each result), separately capturing the perspectives of different demographic groups (especially IDPs/returnees, male/female, older/younger)
- Observations of field locations and infrastructure rehabilitated with LEARN funding
- Case studies – one case study mandatory, more than one preferred. Topics of interest for case studies will be provided to evaluation team during the planning stage. At the same time LEARN will appreciate ideas brought by evaluation consultant/team

6. Deliverables and Timeline

- **Inception Report** (max 10 pages) containing proposed methodology incl. proposed adjustments of the evaluation questions, a brief evaluability assessment, sampling strategy, tools and work schedule. Evaluability assessment will provide review of the degree to which the proposed evaluation questions can be answered and measured effectively and findings attributed to project. This should be done based on document review and consultation of the following aspects with project teams:
 - Available data: what relevant data is currently available to track progress and measure outcomes? What implications does availability or lack of data have for evaluation design?
 - Considerations for data collection and limitations: what limitations and challenges exist for data collection and how could these be mitigated or overcome?
 - Use of findings and lessons learned: how will project management team and stakeholders use findings? What are the implications of such use for evaluation design?
- **Validation Presentation** conducted by the evaluator at the end of the field mission to introduce, discuss and validate the initial findings, lessons and recommendations with LEARN partners
- **Draft Report** allowing for feedback from Consortium, within two weeks from the end of field assignment. Case study(ies) will be annexed to the draft report.
- **Final Report** incorporating feedback from Consortium to the Draft Report and final recommendations, within two weeks from receiving the response.
- **Evaluation data** including interview transcripts/summaries/recordings, photo documentation, site observation records, databases if produced etc.

These deliverables are to be:

- prepared in English

- submitted to LEARN electronically via e-mail: meal.spe@learnconsortium.org and dcop@learnconsortium.org.

DELIVERABLE	CONTENT	RESPONSIBILITIES
Inception Report	Evaluator provides clarifications on methodology (incl. list of documents to be reviewed, sampling, tools, work schedule, evaluability assessment)	Evaluator submits to LEARN electronically. LEARN provides all necessary inputs such as project documents, timing requirements etc.)
Validation Presentation	Initial Findings, lessons, recommendations	Evaluator carries out a validation session for LEARN ideally at field level LEARN organizes venue (physical or virtual) and invites participants
Draft of the Final Report	Full report (max 5 pages of executive summary, maximum of 25 pages of main chapters excluding annexes and forefront pages, font Arial 10 with 1.15 line spacing)	Evaluator submits the draft of the final report to LEARN LEARN provides feedback within 5 working days of the draft report receipt
Final Report	Revised report	Evaluator submits the draft of the final report to LEARN
Evaluation data	Interview transcripts/summaries/recordings, photo documentation, site observation records, databases if produced etc.	Evaluator submits the data to LEARN in one package, all documents must be in either English (preferred) or Arabic

Desired structure of the evaluation report:

- Executive summary: Summary of the evaluation, with particular emphasis on the main findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.
- Introduction: Description of the evaluated intervention, its logic, history, organisation and stakeholders. Presentation of the evaluation's purpose and questions.
- Methodology: Description of the sampling strategy and methods used for data collection; description of the limitations.
- Findings: Factual evidence relevant to the questions asked by the evaluation and interpretations of such evidence (answered evaluation questions).
- Conclusions: Assessments of intervention results and performance against given evaluation criteria and standards of performance.
 - Problems and needs (Relevance)
 - Achievement of purpose (Effectiveness)
 - Consortium management (Efficiency)
 - (Likely) achievement of wider effects (Impact)
 - (Likely) continuation of achieved results (Sustainability)
- Lessons Learnt: General conclusions with a potential for wider application and use)
- Recommendations: Specific and actionable proposals regarding improvements of the project or management addressed to the client of the evaluation or other intended users.
- Annexes: Terms of Reference, tools, list of respondents, references, etc.

The evaluation report will be reviewed against the Evaluation Policy's "Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report" as described in Appendix 1 of the USAID Evaluation Policy.

Duration of the evaluation

The expected period of the evaluation is to not exceed 5 weeks.

ACTIVITIES	COMPLETION DATE
Preparation (Inception Report)	September 2020
Field work	September 2020
Draft Evaluation Report	September/October 2020

Management and Reporting Lines

- Position under the hierarchical supervision of: LEARN Deputy Chief of Party
- Position under the functional supervision of: LEARN MEAL Specialist
- The Consultant, CMU and Prime Recipient will discuss appropriate working relationships between them.
- Key interlocutors: All CMU Specialists; Consortium Technical Advisory Group members; Key program and/or technical focal points at partner agencies; SI HQ Desk team.

Logistics

The consortium partners will work with the selected consultant and team to identify any potential areas of concern related to security and logistics. The evaluation team is expected to be able to make all logistics arrangements independently, including the transport and accommodation inside NES. While LEARN will share necessary security and access information of which LEARN is aware with the evaluation team, LEARN will not assume responsibility for evaluation team safety or duty of care. If agreed selection of sites to visit requires the evaluation team to make trips to some distant or difficult locations, LEARN and evaluation team will discuss possible logistics support to be provided by LEARN. Final schedules will be adjusted during the initial evaluation planning period.

7. Evaluator profile / team composition

The evaluation study consultant or team is expected to demonstrate the following experience and qualifications:

- At least a Master's degree in Social Science, Political Sciences, Statistics or related field (mandatory for lead evaluator)
- Minimum of 3-5 years of experience in conducting studies, collecting data and producing quality baseline/midterm/end line study reports, preferably for international non-governmental organizations or multilateral agencies (mandatory for lead evaluator)
- Sectoral expertise and experience in emergency projects, experience in evaluating consortium projects (preferred, not mandatory)
- Experience working in the conflict or post-conflict environments (preferred, not mandatory)
- Good knowledge of the context and the conflict in Northeast Syria, where the project is being implemented (preferred, not mandatory)
- Experience of effective interaction with local non-government organizations, government departments, and population (preferred, not mandatory)
- Excellent spoken and written communication skills in English (mandatory) and Arabic/Kurdish (mandatory for at least one evaluation team member). Translation costs will not be covered by LEARN.
- At least one field team member must be a woman and one field team member must be a man (mandatory)
- At least two field team members must be able to access LEARN project sites in Northeast Syria, including one woman and one man (mandatory)
- Evidence of similar work in the recent past (mandatory)

8. Application process

SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL invites consultants to apply for the provision of services as described above. Interested consultants must submit a **Cover Letter outlining their financial offer (daily rate with clarifications on other cost covering expectations), proposal to meet the ToR, scheduling and CVs of key evaluation team members (Lead evaluator, Sector experts) providing information on their capacity and experience showing that they are qualified for the services.**

Interested consultants may express their interest by sending an email to the following address: dcop@learnconsortium.org and meal.spe@learnconsortium.org **by end of 10 August 2020 (UTC+3)** and expressly mentioning « **LEARN Final Evaluation Consultancy**»

A short list of consultants will be established after the call for expressions of interest and the consultation will follow the rules and procedures of SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL for the use of Consultants. The interest shown by a Consultant does not imply any obligation on the part of SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL for inclusion in the short list.

9. Budget and payment schedule

%	Milestones
50%	Following the signing of the Contract on Evaluation Services
30%	After the draft evaluation report has been submitted and approved
20%	After the final version of the final evaluation report and the evaluation data has been received and approved

LEARN will require specific and data-supported answers to each of the agreed evaluation questions or strong justification why the data could not be obtained. Justification of data unavailability must be communicated by the evaluator without delay as soon as it becomes apparent and approved by LEARN. Failure to do so can result in decreasing the consultant's remuneration.