Real Time Evaluation (RTE)
Terms of Reference 8th July 2020

Grant Contract: S09-50-A 321.50 AFG 01/19
Food aid and improved access to shelter, safe drinking water and hygiene through cash-transfer measures for internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities in the province of Herat, Afghanistan.

1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Afghanistan is experiencing one of the worst protracted crises in the world. While in its 40th year of war, the country is now categorized as the least peaceful country in the world, replacing Syria[1]. A combination of conflict, natural disasters and economic insecurity is affecting the country and causing massive population displacements. Active conflict, severe droughts alternating with extensive floods episodes, large-scale population movements, and limited livelihood options continue to disrupt and deprive people of access to essential services impairing Afghans' living conditions. The absence of a political solution to the conflict, increased insecurity due to indiscriminate and widespread hostilities targeting civilians. Similarly, the un-known short- and long-term consequences due to C-19 pandemic only worsen the country's position whilst forecasted scenarios[2] outline an increasingly difficult humanitarian situation.

Half way through the implementation of the above-mentioned project, Caritas Germany as lead partner, has planned to conduct an Interim Evaluation which will take the shape of a Real Time Evaluation (RTE). The decision leading to adopt the RTE approach resides in the sudden increase in the scale of the response driven by the recent effects of the C-19 pandemic. In consequence to the disruption of the smooth implementation of project activities due to C-19, which caused a considerable increase in terms of needs and partners' efforts, the RTE will bridge the gap formed by limited monitoring opportunities by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project and calling for immediate adjustments. The project RTE will examine achieved program results and partners' collaboration, highlighting issues and findings of the implementation thus far. This approach will enable country teams to receive a targeted and timely analysis and will support in facilitating actions for improved response, contributing in promptly shaping on-going programming and informing on project achievements.

2. OBJECTIVES AND USE

The main objectives of the RTE are to provide real-time feedback to the project partners, lesson learning for the continuation of the project and to seek out the views of affected people on the quality and appropriateness of the response.

The RTE aims to be a light and self-sufficient evaluation, but nonetheless to provide a clear understanding of the key issues and challenges of the response through rigorous evidence-based analysis (triangulation, document analysis, key informant interviews etc.). Based on the assessment of the current situation, the conclusions of the RTE will support partners to develop and agree on clear plans of action to address key coordination problems or operational bottlenecks with the

[1] Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2019: Measuring Peace in a Complex World, Sydney, June 2019. Available from: http://visionofhumanity.org/reports (accessed 13th August 2019).
[2] Acaps, Displacement and Access in Afghanistan: Scenarios, June 2019.

overall aim of enabling a more effective response moving forward.

3. METHODOLOGY

An RTE is a rapid participatory assessment, conducted during the last stages of a cycle of humanitarian operations performed by project partners, with the objective of providing an improvement-oriented review of project activities. Thus, the process and products of an RTE are immediately integrated within the programme cycle. The results of the RTE will almost simultaneously feed back its findings for immediate use by partners at the field level. The RTE differs from a more classical ex-post evaluation due to the speed of mobilization and its emphasis on immediate lesson-learning over impact. The RTE will play a valuable part in illustrating the situation at the moment at which it is carried out for the use of future evaluative efforts and program adjustments. Moreover, by carrying out consultations with actual or potential beneficiaries, it promotes accountability.

The applied methods for the RTE shall be light and participatory, yet rigorous enough to lend credibility to its conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation will be carried out through analyses of various sources of information including desk reviews (project proposal, monthly progress updates, needs assessments, Post Distribution Monitoring surveys, project/program work plans, minutes of decision-making meetings, monitoring reports / field visits reports, etc); field visits; interviews with key stakeholders (affected population, international and national partners, UN organizations, field and managerial staff, local government institutions such as MoRR/DoRR, MRRD, MoLSAMD, DoPH); systematic analysis of remotely gathered data (documentary evidence, monitoring data where available); and through cross-validation of data. The regional level analysis will also consider, as relevant, operational coordination among partners and with relevant stakeholders; coordination with clusters and the humanitarian community; as well as linkages at the regional and local level.
While maintaining independence, the evaluation will seek the views of all parties, including the affected population. Evaluation teams will serve as ‘facilitators’, encouraging and assisting field personnel, both individually and collectively, to look critically at their operations and find creative solutions to problems.

The emphasis of analysis and learning will be on the ongoing above-mentioned project in Herat province, results achieved and processes adopted, as well as coordination and collaboration among partners. An external consultant will be engaged to conduct the evaluation in the locations targeted by the program and among partners. The evaluation will then support country team learning and help initiate follow-up and needed corrective actions. A matrix of findings, conclusions and recommendations will be shared among partners at national level, as well as with the humanitarian community if deemed constructive.

4. FOCUS AND KEY ISSUES

The major thrust of the RTE will be on the *effective and timely provision of needs-based relief assistance*. It will as well address *critical issues related to coordination among partners and management systems,* due to the new nature of the partnership and geographical area of implementation.

The RTE will then focus on *effectiveness, coverage and accountability*, investigating how methods and tools adopted to select, reach and support target beneficiaries were well elaborated and adequately fitting the initial project purposes. Particular attention will be given to the cash assistance modality and the adoption of protection messages by target population. Finally, limited monitoring opportunities dictated by C-19 related restrictions require an in-depth investigation of partnership collaboration, as well as a critical analysis of the relevance of the intervention. The RTE will serve as a communication tool between partners and all stakeholders and can therefore be referred to as a means of developing relevant findings and recommendations.

The generic questions to be addressed during the RTE are the following:

Relevance and Appropriateness

Overarching questions:

- ***To what extent are activities in line with needs and priorities identified?***
- ***What parts of the affected populations benefited from humanitarian assistance? Is this population corresponding to the most vulnerable community members?***
- ***What were the main (security or other) events which hampered the response?***
- ***Do stakeholders adhere to project objectives, methods and strategy?***
- ***Was the design and implementation of the intervention gender-sensitive?***

Specific questions:

- Has a common needs assessment and analysis been carried out and if yes/by whom, has it been used in planning and response?
- What proportions of the affected population could be assisted? Who was excluded, and what were the key barriers to full access? Has humanitarian assistance been impartial (i.e. based strictly on needs)?
- What critical factors (i.e. security events, infrastructures, procedures, access, enabling environment, etc.) help explain why the response was or was not delivered in an adequate and timely manner?
- In insecure operating environments, how has this affected humanitarian responsibilities to uphold strict neutrality (i.e. to ensure that humanitarian action does not have the appearance of favouring any party to a conflict)?
- How far has the humanitarian response been tailored to meet local needs and ensure ownership by, and accountability to, affected populations? What measures are in place to ensure transparency in humanitarian action?
- To what extent have the needs of all segments of the population, men and boys, women and girls and vulnerable groups been assessed and the response tailored to the different needs of the specific sub-populations?
- How was gender sensitivity ensured? Where the methods and approaches, as well as main project interlocutors facilitating involvement of all population and gender groups?
- In what way have the identification of humanitarian priorities been based on sex/age disaggregated data and gender analysis of these data, and other key drivers of marginalization, including by livelihood system or ethnic affiliation?
- How were the project objectives, methods and approaches been shared and endorsed by stakeholders (community, local government, clusters)?
- In what way was the chosen intervention approach the best way to meet the food security, shelter, WASH, protection and health needs of affected populations and intended beneficiaries?
- In what way were adopted transfer modalities the best way of meeting recipient’s needs

Operational Effectiveness, Coverage and Accountability

Overarching questions:

- ***What were the main operational results, and the positive and negative outcomes for all segments of the affected population, during each phase?***
- ***Have critical gaps and issues been identified and addressed in a timely way and with***

- ***involvement of each partner (international and local)?***
- ***Have appropriate common standards been adapted/applied to the project deliverables and to what degree have these been met?***
- ***Did the project activities reach the major population groups facing life-threatening needs?***
- ***Were the humanitarian needs of key target groups (men and women, boys and girls) met by the intervention?***

Specific questions:
- How timely and successful is the response in delivering against stated objectives/indicators (as per proposal work plan, individual agencies' articulated benchmarks)?
- Have the clusters/local partners been instrumental in identifying and addressing critical gaps early on?
- What segments of the affected population could and could not be assisted, and why?
- Which type of learning and self-evaluation processes were in place? How did partners operationalize findings, if any?
- Is the current strategy for risk management of cash-based operations adequate, and how well do partners comply with it?
- Do information flows facilitate a balanced response to the needs of the population? Do all actors have confidence in the information made available?
- What is the partner's level of commitment and compliance to international standards (such as the Code of Conduct for RC/RC Movement and NGOs in disaster relief, Sphere guidelines, and the best practice encapsulated in People in Aid and the IASC Code on protection from sexual abuse and exploitation)?
- Was the selection of beneficiaries inclusive and covering the entire target population, so to allow a proper selection of the most needed households?
- Is the program equally effective for differing population groups?
- Were the messages understood and applied equally by beneficiaries according to their demographic group?
- Which type, if any, of consultation mechanisms with local communities are in place?
- Has information about the humanitarian response been communicated in a manner that is widely accessible to the affected people in the region? Are feedback mechanisms (CRM) in place that link beneficiary concerns to adaptations in humanitarian strategies/approaches?
- Are the CRM mechanisms in place effectively responding to the needs of the target communities (i.e. the mechanisms are used / the interested people are receiving a satisfactory reply)?

Strategic Efficiency

Overarching questions:
- ***To what extent are activities implemented in a timely manner?***
- ***Was the planned budget sufficient to the implementation of the activities?***
- ***To what extent has the use of project resources been appropriate to meet humanitarian needs of key target groups (men and women, boys and girls)?***

Specific questions:
- Was the set timeframe sufficient for the implementation of the set activities?
- Did aspects connected to the establishment of partners in a new geographical area been considered in setting an appropriate timeframe?
- To what extent were the activities implemented as planned?
- Have considerable unforeseen costs arisen?
- Did the planned budget consider all collateral costs associated with delivery modality,

distance and monitoring needs?
- Were established transfer values appropriate to the context and needs, and aligned with cluster guidelines?
- Was the intervention cost-sufficient in terms of costs per recipient for different implementation mechanisms/modes of transfer (cash and in-kind)?
- Did project activities overlap in any way with other actors' intervention in the target area?

Coordination and Connectedness

Overarching questions:
- ***Has an inclusive and well-managed coordination system been established, including with the local (provincial, district level) actors, civil society, clusters and all other relevant stakeholders?***
- ***Were activities planned and implemented in support to pre-existing response plans, structures and capacities?***
- ***Was the coordination system supported by an efficient communication and information management system (i.e. enhancing information flow within the field, between field and central offices, and with CG HQ)?***
- ***How adequately have cross-cutting issues be dealt with in all aspects of the response and in all sectors?***
- ***What have been the linkages between the intervention and any other interventions in relief/recovery/development?***

Specific questions:
- How effective has coordination among partners been (with specific focus on harmonization of tools and information sharing towards cross cutting issues, cash transfer schemes, and protection)?
- How effective have the project partners coordinated the response with the humanitarian community (cluster), the local government (provincial, district and local level) and the civil society?
- In what ways, if any, have local capacities been capitalized on and strengthened?
- As areas of intervention are considered of protracted crisis, how has it been ensured that the response supports, rather than undermines, community resilience?
- How effectively have cross-cutting issues been addressed in the response? Was there a network to ensure information sharing and gap filling on cross-cutting issues across programs and sectors?
- What is the probability of the continuation of positive project outcomes beyond the end of the project (both by project participants and possibly others)?
- To what extent are the people affected not negatively affected but more prepared, resilient and less at risk as a result of the project?
- Is there a well-defined and realistic project exit strategy, taking into account the challenges for sustainability?

Impact

Overarching questions:
- ***To what extent have short-term emergency measures been consistent with longer-term development interventions and goals?***
- ***What were the effects of the intervention on recipients' lives?***
- ***What were the gender-specific impacts? Did the intervention influence the gender context?***

- ***What were the child-specific impacts? Did the intervention influence the condition and perception of childhood among parents?***

Specific questions:
- Did the project provide vulnerable households with the right instruments to overcome the status of uncertainty and the right instruments to boost resilience?
- Are beneficiaries targeted during the first half of the project in a better condition now, when compared with baseline data?
- Is there any indication for an emerging impact on the communities in terms of shelter, food security, income and livelihood enhancement?
- Is the project contributing to systemic changes (i.e. to improved rights, improved infrastructures, diminished cases of abuse, improved access to health care for pregnant and lactating women)?

Coherence

Overarching questions:
- ***To what extent were context factors (political stability/instability, population movements etc) considered in the design and delivery of the intervention?***
- ***To what extent was the partners' intervention coherent with key policies and programmes of other partners operating within the same context?***
- ***To what extent was the intervention design and delivery overall in line with humanitarian principles?***

Specific questions:
- To what extent was the intervention coherent with other actors' key policies and programmes – including local and / or national – operating within the same context?
- To what extent has the project engaged in stakeholder coordination, including local and national authorities?
- How has coordination – also with national / local coordination mechanisms – affected the planning and implementation of the project?
- Which factors have restricted coordination, and which factors have supported it? Are there any coordination success factors that can be transferred to other situations?

Additional questions from partners could be added after selection of consultant.

5. EVALUATION TEAM, REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND DELIVERABLES

The services of a national independent consultant company/research institute will be sought to undertake the entire evaluation process. During the entire assignment period, the consultant agrees to take all preventative measures against C-19 to avoid putting him-/herself, partner's staff and beneficiaries at risk. The deliverables of the RTE will include the following:

1. An RTE proposal by the consultant including budget, methodology and qualitative research tools, that would have to be approved by the lead partner.
2. A desk review and field visits to the project targeted locations to gather information and evidence on issues described in these ToRs (including interviews and focus group discussions). Field visits will take place over a 10-day period.
3. A matrix of findings, conclusions and recommendations.
4. Presentations and lessons-learnt workshop to project partners. The workshop is considered, together with the final RTE report, as the primary output of the evaluation. The purpose of the workshop is to present and discuss findings, conclusions and recommendations and

reformulate them if necessary and to identify key actors and methods in order to respond to these recommendations in future programming.

5. An outcome summary (2-5 pages) of the workshop (one week after the workshop).
6. A draft RTE report (1 week after workshop).
7. A final RTE report (submitted to partners) containing an executive summary of less than 2,000 words and a main text of less than 10,000 words (in MS Office and PDF for final version and English language), both inclusive of clear and concise recommendations. The use of graphs, visuals, tables and a dashboard with results is recommended as relevant. Annexes should include a list of interviewees, bibliography, a description of method(s) employed, and any other relevant materials. (3 days after final partners comments on draft report).
8. A matrix outlining comments received to the draft evaluation report, whether they were accepted, partially accepted or rejected, and the rationale for that decision.

7. DURATION OF EVALUATION AND TENTATIVE TIMEPLAN

The assignment is expected to take place from the 30th of August, considering that field work should start by the 1st of September and final report submitted by the 30th of September 2020.

Phase	Deliverables	Time frame indication *	Payment	Working days indication
Inception & instrument development phase	*Deliverable 1:* Final RTE proposal including budget, methodology and qualitative research tools, approved by AFJR Lead.	2 days	30 % of total	1 day
Data collection phase	Desk review, interviews and field visits Afghanistan.	10 days		10 days (to visit 4 field locations).
RTE report phase	Data analysis phase.	1 day		1 day
	Deliverable 2: Matrix of findings, conclusions and recommendations.	1 day		1 day
	Deliverable 3: Lessons-learnt workshop in Kabul (tbd on timing).	1 day	30 % of total	1 day
	Deliverable 4: Outcome summary (2-5 pages) of the workshop.	1 day		1 day

	Deliverable 5: Draft RTE report submitted to partners for review.	7 days		7 days
	Deliverable 6: Final RTE report including matrix of comments.	3 days	40 % of total	3 days
Total			**100%**	**25 days****

* Timetable depends on the security situation, not all areas are accessible in case of insecurity.

** Number of workdays as if for one consultant at senior rate, however lump sum to be divided over a team of researchers