



OXFAM



Feinstein
International Center



Humanitarian Evidence Programme Call for Proposals:

Acute Malnutrition

February 2015

Oxfam GB in partnership with Feinstein International Center

This Call for Proposals is soliciting applications to conduct an evidence synthesis on **acute malnutrition** as part of the Humanitarian Evidence Programme. This Programme has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Issue date: Tuesday, February 10, 2015

Deadline: Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 17.00 GMT, 12.00 noon EST (GMT-5), 20.00 EAT (GMT+3), 22.30 IST (GMT+5½)

Question: What is the evidence on the relationship between recovery and/or cure rates and relapse, default rates and/or repeated episodes in the treatment of acute malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies?

For additional Calls for Proposals, please consult the web page (www.oxfam.org.uk/hep). The Humanitarian Evidence Programme is currently commissioning separate reviews on the topic of market support interventions and shelter/settlement strategies in humanitarian situations. The programme expects to release subsequent Calls for Proposals in the spring and summer of 2015. Individuals or teams can apply for any question; if applicants would like to apply for more than one question, separate applications for each must be made.

The Terms of Reference provide more details on the process. A briefing paper accompanies this question at the end of this document (in the annex of the Terms of Reference), detailing the programme's interest in the research question and providing relevant information for potential review teams. The guidance note on conducting an evidence synthesis in the humanitarian sector and application can be found on the [website](#).

Budget: Applicants should submit a detailed budget for the review, and value for money is a criterion for applications. As a guide, the market support interventions evidence synthesis in question is expected to cost between £25,000 and £50,000.

Desired criteria for applicants: Applicants may apply either individually or form teams, and they will be reviewed based on their:

- Key competencies and staff composition;
- Management, including the timetable for deliverables;
- Quality of technical proposal; and,
- Budget, ensuring value for money.

The Humanitarian Evidence Programme accepts proposals from around the world. The Programme encourages proposals from applicants based in low- or middle-income countries, and proposals including such individuals in the team. Proposals will be reviewed by a panel and scored according to the criteria listed in Section 9 of the Terms of Reference.

Application process and deadlines:

Applications should be sent to eott1@oxfam.org.uk with 'Humanitarian Evidence Review Application' in the message title. Applications must be submitted ***in a single Word or PDF Document via the Applicant template covering the points below*** (including CVs of relevant personnel) no later than **Wednesday, March 4, 2015 at 17.00 GMT**. No late proposals will be accepted and incomplete proposals may result in disqualification. The budget may be presented in the single Word/PDF document or via a separate Excel document. Please do not submit documents that are not requested.

Applications should include, as specified in the application document:

- Basic information, including staff composition and relevant CVs. Applicants can be individuals or teams. Teams can include members in different locations and for different pieces of the work, but they must identify the Primary Investigator.
- Letter of interest (optional).
- Description of key competencies, including methodological and content expertise.
- Management plan, including the timeline.
- Outline of your technical proposal, including proposed approach and research methodology.
- Proposed budget. This should be presented in £GBP and must include all costs for undertaking the research and sufficiently cover travel, accommodation and subsistence needs for any overseas work. All relevant taxes and related costs must be included in the budget and cannot be charged on top. Budgets do not need to cover the cost for the final design and publication of the findings.
 - Successful applicants are not expected to undertake any travel on behalf of the programme, unless they deem such travel as necessary to the evidence synthesis, such as to access resources (i.e. libraries, databases) or for management purposes. All costs should be included in the proposed budget.
 - If bidders deem they would benefit from training in the approach of evidence reviews, they are encouraged to include such training costs (including travel, if relevant) within their proposed budgets. No additional funds are available for capacity-building through the Humanitarian Evidence Programme.

The Humanitarian Evidence Programme encourages proposals from individuals and teams in low- or middle-income countries, as well as proposals including such researchers in the review team. Applicants must declare any real or potential conflicts of interest.

Any queries should be sent to eott1@oxfam.org.uk by 23 February 2015, and all answers will be posted on the Humanitarian Evidence Programme [web page](#) by 27 February 2015.

Terms of Reference

Humanitarian Evidence Programme

February 2015

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Humanitarian Evidence Programme aims to synthesize research in the humanitarian sector and communicate the findings to key stakeholders, with the ultimate goal of improving humanitarian policy and practice. Over the course of 2.5 years between June 2014 and December 2016, the programme will commission a series of reviews to distil evidence in areas of interest to the humanitarian sector and focus on research uptake.

The programme is a DFID-funded partnership between Oxfam GB and the Feinstein International Center (FIC) at Tufts University. More information is available on the [Oxfam GB](#) and [FIC](#) programme websites.

2. AUDIENCE AND USE OF FINDINGS

The outputs should be aimed at the humanitarian policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Thus, the audience for this work will be individuals and institutions responsible for the funding, design and delivery of assistance in the humanitarian sector. Specifically, this includes:

- Humanitarian practitioners, and organisations involved in standard setting, training and capacity building in the humanitarian sector;
- Policy makers, which—for the purpose of this programme—will include the DFID Humanitarian Advisory Cadre, DFID’S Conflict, Humanitarian, and Security Department (CHASE) and the UN humanitarian cluster system,¹ public policy officials (e.g. civil servants, international civil servants, local government officials, legislative staff, advisors etc.) and politicians (e.g. Members of Parliament, ministers, councillors, etc.); and,
- Researchers and academics in the humanitarian field.

The findings will be made publically available, including on DFID’s Research for Development (R4D) platform. The findings may be used in a research uptake plan, including at events and in policy briefs. Additionally, successful applicants are encouraged to disseminate their findings within their networks, and budget is available to submit findings to a peer-reviewed journal as an open-access article.

¹ The UN has introduced nine thematic clusters for coordination at both the field and global levels, with each field-level cluster led by a UN agency functioning as “provider of last resort” and which is accountable to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator. The nine clusters, together with their lead agencies, are nutrition (UNICEF); health (WHO); WASH (UNICEF); shelter (UNHCR/IFRC); camp coordination (UNHCR/IOM); protection (UNHCR/OHCHR/UNICEF); early recovery (UNDP); logistics (WFP); and telecommunications (OCHA/UNICEF/WFP).

The ultimate beneficiaries of this work will be those affected by natural disasters and conflict, who should receive better quality assistance. It is expected that sectoral evidence generated by this Programme will have cross cutting relevance.

3. BACKGROUND FOR REVIEW QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Please see the Annex I for the briefing note on the review question.

4. REVIEW QUESTION

What is the evidence on the relationship between recovery and/or cure rates and relapse, default rates and/or repeated episodes in the treatment of acute malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies?

5. APPROACH TO EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

The methodological approach to evidence synthesis in the Humanitarian Evidence Programme is provided in the document 'Guidance Note: Evidence Synthesis in the Humanitarian Evidence Programme' found on the programme web page (www.oxfam.org.uk/hep). Reviewers are expected to consult the guidance note and listed resources in assistance for completing their reviews.

6. ETHICS AND RISKS

Please see Section 13: 'Guidelines for Undertaking Research with Ethics' for general ethics guidelines. Although reviewers are not expected to undertake primary research, ethics is of primary importance including being transparent about search methods, inclusion criteria, methods of synthesis, risks of bias in included studies, and any potential conflicts of interest. Studies and results must be presented in a way that respects those impacted by humanitarian crises and aims to be honest and transparent, thereby protecting the author and Oxfam against libel. Selected applicants will be provided with guidelines for undertaking research with Ethics in Section 13 and guidelines for avoiding libel in Section 12.

7. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Reviewers will be expected to provide the following outputs:

- A customised timetable for the review process;
- A list of Advisory Board members for the question and Terms of Reference for the Advisory Board;
- A scoping assessment, where requested;
- A full review protocol, containing all elements listed in the Guidance Note;
- A brief on ideas for dissemination of the full review;
- A full draft of the review, including a 1-4 page plain language summary, clear and concise main text, appendices detailing technical information, and all relevant citations in the agreed format;
- A revised draft, incorporating comments from the peer review process, for final submission.

The length of the final document will depend on a variety of factors including the number and complexity of the question and studies included. All documents should include a 1-4 page plain language executive summary and appendices detailing methodology. For similar review studies, please see:

- <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/SystematicReviews.aspx>,
- <http://www.3ieimpact.org/evidence/systematic-reviews/>, and
- <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=3437>.

A template for the final review will be provided in the final contract. In addition to the above outputs, reviewers will be expected to consult technical and content experts as appropriate and attend a brief, 30-minute discussion over the phone or other audio medium (e.g. Skype) with the programme team every two weeks.

8. TIMETABLE

Upon awarding of the contract, the programme team and selected reviewers will agree to a timeline for the delivery of programme outputs. A sample timeline is provided below, though it is subject to change based on conversations with the selected reviewers.

Week no.	Reviewer deliverable	Programme Team deliverable
1		Notify reviewer of their success
2	Contract, Timetable agreed	
6	Assemble Advisory Group	
10	Full protocol	Written feedback (within 4 weeks)
14	One-page map of the reviewer's/review team's networks for dissemination of the full review and its findings	
17	Revised protocol	Notify review team via email that they can commence the process of conducting the review (within 3 weeks)
28	Full Draft of Review	Written feedback from peer reviewers (within 6 weeks) on the review
40	Finalised Review	

9. CONTRACT AWARD CRITERIA

Applicants will be notified of their application status within six weeks of the closing date of this Request for Proposals. Proposals awarded based by a bidding review committee based on the criteria below.

Scoring matrix for Humanitarian Evidence Programme proposals

CATEGORY	CRITERIA
Key Competencies and Staff Composition (35%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subject-matter expertise on the topic of the review ▪ Adequate understanding of the review methodology and of the ability to apply it to the topic at hand ▪ Quantitative and qualitative skills necessary to conduct proposed synthesis, most likely including statistical meta-analysis ▪ Ability to convey information clearly in writing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Familiarity with information management and search processes ▪ Access to information management systems necessary to conduct the review ▪ Experience with evidence synthesis, research, and/or evaluation (as a user, producer, or peer reviewer of evidence synthesis products) ▪ Involvement of individuals based in low- and middle-income countries in the review and on the review team.
Management (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The review plan matches the time commitment of the Primary Investigator ▪ and team members (where applicable). ▪ The proposed timeline is appropriate. ▪ <u>For review teams:</u> The team has a clear management strategy.
Budget (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear, comprehensive, and reasonable budget ▪ Budget represents best value in regard to consistency of quality, reliability, availability and performance at a competitive cost.
Quality of Technical Proposal (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suitability of proposed methods to the research question ▪ Clearly articulated primary and secondary research questions ▪ Clear plan to account for heterogeneity in the data ▪ Identification of relevant definitions and strategies for focusing the question

Oxfam reserves the right not to award any bids if none meet the minimum standards for applicants. Recommendations for procurement will be reviewed by the designated Oxfam Procurement personnel to further ensure best value (i.e. value for money).

10. RESEARCH MANAGEMENT

The first point of contact for the research will be the Humanitarian Evidence Programme and Communications Manager at Oxfam GB. Successful applicants are also expected to work with individuals from Oxfam’s partner, Feinstein International Center (FIC) at Tufts University. Primary investigators are expected to participate in fortnightly conference calls with the programme managers at Oxfam and FIC.

11. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Researchers are required to demonstrate competency in the parameters listed below:

- Subject-matter expertise on the humanitarian question of the review;
- Understanding of the methodology of systematic reviews as an approach to evidence synthesis;
- Experience in information search and management or access to information specialist/experienced librarian to assist with the search process for eligible studies;
- Knowledge of qualitative/narrative synthesis methods;
- Ability to convey information in clear, simple, non-technical language;
- Fluent written and spoken English; and,
- Knowledge of methods for quantitative analysis and statistical meta-analysis *if applicable*.

12. AVOIDING LIBEL IN RESEARCH

Successful applicants will be expected to ensure they avoid libel: the publication of any statement that harms the reputation of another. More information on avoiding libel will be provided to successful applicants.

13. UNDERTAKING RESEARCH WITH ETHICS

Successful applicants will be expected to undertake the review with ethics. More guidelines on undertaking research with ethics will be provided in the final Terms of Reference.

ANNEX 1.

HUMANITARIAN EVIDENCE PROGRAMME BRIEFING PAPER: EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS ON ACUTE MALNUTRITION

Purpose of this document: This Briefing Paper provides background information on the interest of the commissioning team in an evidence synthesis in the topic area of acute malnutrition. Where relevant, it provides additional information on the scope of the review and on parameters reviewers should take into account when drafting the review protocol. Ultimate responsibility for defining the terms and scope of the review lies with the reviewers, but the use of this Briefing Paper, coupled with the Guidance Note on Evidence Synthesis in the Humanitarian Evidence Programme and pertinent information in the Call for Proposals, can assist reviewers in the initial stages of planning for their evidence synthesis.

Review question: What is the evidence on the relationship between recovery and/or cure rates and relapse, default rates and/or repeated episodes in the treatment of acute malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies?

Relevant guidance to reviewers:

Defining malnutrition: The commissioning team is interested in research on both severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), and even mild wasting where it is explicitly considered in programming and/or research alongside MAM. Reviewers should note to which form of acute malnutrition findings apply. Reviewers should consult the Sphere standards for the definitions for SAM and MAM, as well as for guidance on rates of recovery, relapse, and cure.² Acute malnutrition programmes use recovery, default, death, and relapse rates as performance indicators. Malnutrition programming may include therapeutic feeding, selective feeding, community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM), integrated management of acute malnutrition (IMAM), etc.

² Sphere Project, "Management of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies standard 1: Moderate acute malnutrition," *Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, 2004*, available at: www.spherehandbook.org/en/management-of-acute-malnutrition-and-micronutrient-deficiencies-standard-1-moderate-acute-malnutrition/ [accessed 2 February 2015] **and** Sphere Project, "Management of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies standard 2: Severe acute malnutrition," *Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, 2004*, available at www.spherehandbook.org/en/management-of-acute-malnutrition-and-micronutrient-deficiencies-standard-2-severe-acute-malnutrition/ [accessed 2 February 2015].

Oedema is not systematically included in most studies related to acute malnutrition and reviewers should note how oedema is accounted for (if at all), or if specific studies focusing on recovery or relapse from oedematous malnutrition are included and how these are similar or different from non-oedematous acute malnutrition.

Defining recovery, cure and relapse: Generally, recovery/cure are measurements of successful treatment and terms used interchangeably between management of acute malnutrition programs. Relapse refers to individuals discharged as cured, but who again fulfill outpatient therapeutic programme (OTP) criteria for malnutrition treatment – in other words, individuals who were considered cured at one point, but who are acutely malnourished again at a later stage.³ Default refers to individuals who did not complete treatment due to a loss to follow-up. “Repeated episodes” can refer to individuals who have exited care but reverted to be acutely malnourished and returned to treatment. However, it may in some cases refer to individuals who experience multiple episodes of *untreated* acute malnutrition in their lifetime. Again, specificity and clarity in use of terms is critical in this review.

Population:

- Most acute malnutrition treatment programs target children from 6 months to the age of five years (<59 months), and pregnant and lactating women. In rare circumstances, older children, wasted adults and the elderly may also be included in programmes treating acute malnutrition.
- Reviewers should disaggregate by age (and sex, if possible) and focus mainly on experiences relating to children between 6-59 months, and pregnant and lactating women. The empirical evidence of experiences with other specific groups should be captured as well if appropriate studies have been conducted on those groups.
- Infants less than six months are not routinely included in calculations of recovery/cure, default, relapse, repeated rates. Studies focused on infants should be specified and separately analysed.

Context: For the purposes of this question, the commissioning team is particularly interested in research on acute malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies, which include both slow-onset and sudden crises and refer to both natural and man-made disasters, as humanitarian crises arising from armed conflict, or some combination of the above. Reviewers should disaggregate the evidence they synthesize in ways that clearly delineate to which type of humanitarian emergency the research refers in each case. If a large body of evidence arises with regard to these issues in a particular country or region, or with regard to a particular type of humanitarian crisis, reviewers should note this in their evidence synthesis, as well as discuss the applicability of the findings to other contexts.

Other data disaggregation: Where possible, data should be disaggregated by sex and age as well as humanitarian context and geographic location. If additional considerations arise in eligible studies that specifically affect a particular group (e.g. older persons, persons with

³ Valid International (CTC Research and Development Programme), “Community-Based Therapeutic Care (CTC): A Field Manual,” 2006.

disabilities, unaccompanied minors, female heads of household), reviewers should note this in their evidence synthesis. Reviewers should also note variations in findings between rural and urban areas. It is expected that review teams will name further parameters for disaggregation as they arise in their protocol development process.

Next steps: Bidders interested in undertaking this review as part of the Humanitarian Evidence Programme should take the above information into account when drafting their application and proposal. Guidelines and standards for bids and their assessment are discussed in greater detail in the Call for Proposals, while information about how to conduct an evidence synthesis in the Humanitarian Evidence Programme can be found in the accompanying Guidance Note. The successful bidder will then use this Briefing Paper, coupled with conversations with the commissioning team, to guide the process of drafting the protocol for this review.