

SCOPE OF WORK
BRIDGE PROGRAM FINAL EVALUATION- 2023/2024
MERCY CORPS EUROPE

Program to be Evaluated:	Building resilience in communities affected by conflict and crisis (BRIDGE) Program	
Donor:	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)	
Location:	South Darfur, Gedaref, and South Kordofan States	
Timeframe:	5th Jan 2024 – 5 th March 2024, for a duration not exceeding 40 working days	
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OVERVIEW OF BRIDGE PROGRAM

Sudan is in the grip of a complex crisis driven by political instability, conflict, socioeconomic collapse, climate change, and food insecurity affecting up to half of the population. According to IOM, up to 24.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance¹ since the 15th of April armed conflict broke out in Sudan. This has gone up from 15.8 million people at the on-set of 2023 and 14.3 million in 2022. It is now nearly two decades since violence in the Darfur region led to the displacement of millions of people and the start of the current humanitarian response. In the intervening years of the BRIDGE program, countless lives have been saved and suffering reduced for the millions of people, especially Internally displaced Persons (IDPs), who have been caught in the country's protracted crises. Despite the massive efforts of humanitarian agencies, needs still far outstrip current response capacities.

Goal of the BRIDGE program

The goal or purpose of the program is to improve the wellbeing, resilience, and livelihoods of conflict/crisis affected households in South Darfur, Gadaref, and South Kordofan states with MPCA, agricultural extension services, and WASH. The program targets supporting 8,000

¹ <https://www.iom.int/news/urgent-funding-needed-support-millions-impacted-ongoing-conflict-sudan-and-neighbouringcountries#:~:text=Half%20of%20the%20Sudanese%20population,of%20humanitarian%20aid%20and%20protection.>

vulnerable households in South Darfur, Gadaref, and South Kordofan with improved access to food and other basic needs.

To contribute to the achievement of the Program Goal, 3 main purposes were set for the program:

- *Purpose 1:* Vulnerable IDP and host community members have improved access to clean water, basic sanitation facilities, and improved hygiene services.
- *Purpose 2:* Conflict-affected and vulnerable households have access to improved agricultural inputs and adopt improved agricultural practices.
- *Purpose 3:* Conflict-affected IDP and host community populations can meet their emergency needs through multi-purpose cash assistance.

Theory of Change

If targeted households have access to safe **water** sources, **sanitation**, and improved **hygiene** practices, *then* households will be less vulnerable to waterborne diseases and thereby have improved wellbeing and health.

If targeted households have access to quality seeds and apply improved **agriculture** practices, *then* households will be able to meet their food needs while increasing food production capacity, thereby strengthening households' immediate and longer-term food security.

If the most vulnerable households affected by displacement, shocks, and food insecurity receive MPCA, *then* households will be able to access a sufficient quantity and quality of food while reducing negative coping mechanisms.

A brief about program interventions

WASH

In recent years, Waterborne diseases have continued to affect millions of people in Sudan and stretch health and water, sanitation, and hygiene systems. Additionally, in 2021 alone, the country faced concurrent outbreaks of cholera, chikungunya, dysentery, dengue, malaria, measles, diphtheria, hepatitis E, and Rift Valley fevers. Furthermore, seasonal flooding continues to affect large numbers of people, contaminating water, and compounding the spread of waterborne diseases. WASH therefore remains an urgent priority across communities in Sudan with 12.1 million people, the majority residing in the Darfur and South Kordofan States, in need of urgent WASH assistance. Through the BRIDGE program, Mercy Corps is conducting water source assessments; training youth as hand pump mechanics, upgrading handpumps into mini-water yards; conducting water quality tests and disinfections at different water points;

conducting hygiene training and promotion campaigns and rehabilitating latrines and handwashing facilities at health centers among others.

Agriculture & Food Security

Conflict, climate change / shocks and the macroeconomic crisis in Sudan are key drivers of food and nutrition insecurity. The number of acutely food insecure people continued to increase for the third year in a row, reaching a record 11.7 million people in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 and above between June-September 2022, due to droughts, reduced grain production, high prices, and eroding livelihoods due to the multi-year economic crisis. The recent armed conflict has also compounded the economic crisis as it has negatively impacted the price and availability of cereals in Sudan. To improve the food security of vulnerable HHs, the BRIDGE program distributed improved seeds via a restricted value voucher system to increase production and yields during the 2023 farming seasons. To ensure that farmers have access to certified seeds in remote communities, Mercy Corps provided seeds to the farmers through a voucher-based modality. Farmers were able to redeem their vouchers from seed vendors during a Mercy Corps facilitated seed fair. The voucher distribution gives farmers the opportunity to select from a variety of preferred improved seeds such as millet seeds, maize seeds, okra seeds, and sesame seeds. The voucher values were informed by a market survey which determined the price of each variety of seeds. However, due to the security situation in the country, it was only possible to deliver the seed fairs in Gedaref state. A total of 700 food insecure small holder HHs were reached in Gedaref. Voucher recipients were selected through a rigorous registration and verification process that was supported by local leaders. Priority was given to female headed households, persons with disabilities, refugees and IDPs among other vulnerability criteria.

To help increase production and yields during the 2023 agricultural season, Mercy Corps is also providing training on improved agricultural climate smart practices to project participants. Training of Trainers (ToT) will be provided to local farmers champions who will then use their skills to train additional farmers in their respective communities. Each individual smallholder farmer will receive two trainings: the initial training provided at the beginning of the project and a refresher training provided near the project closeout stage

Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)

Vulnerable HHs in the target areas are experiencing cyclical food insecurity. Conflicts, internal displacement, dry spells, and soaring commodity, food, and energy prices have exacerbated food insecurity across Sudan, affecting the most vulnerable strata of Sudan, including IDPs, refugees, and vulnerable resident communities, especially in Darfur and South Kordofan. The on-going armed conflict is further aggravating food insecurity as Sudan has been relying on imports from

other countries. Almost all sectors have been affected by the deteriorating economic situation, including WASH, Nutrition, and FSL, therefore MPCA intervention has enabled Mercy Corps to meet this diverse range of needs through cash transfer to vulnerable food insecure households.

During the height of the lean season, Mercy Corps provided MPCA to the most vulnerable households to help them meet their basic needs and avoid negative coping mechanisms that can undermine future food security. Female headed households, households with malnourished children, households with persons incapable of working because of physical disabilities, households with refugees or IDPS, households with 19 or more people and households without access to land for cultivation among other criteria are specifically targeted with MPCA. Given the wide range of needs for families already bearing the burden of malnutrition, MPCA transfers during the crisis enable households to prioritize their urgent needs and meet the needs of children, especially considering the skyrocketing prices since the start of the crisis. The program currently targets the following localities: Habila, Dilling and Ar Reif Ash Shargi localities in South Kordofan State; Galabat Ash-Shargiah, Al Qureisha and Basunda localities in Gadaref State; East Jebel Marra, Nyala Shimal and Nyala Janoub localities in South Darfur State.

Given the challenge of cash access and delivery post April 15, Mercy Corps approached Ebdaa Bank to pilot the delivery of MPCA given Ebdaa's strong last-mile network of agents in rural parts of Sudan. Mercy Corps has previously worked with Ebdaa bank to support the delivery of MFI products and services to smallholder farmers, agro-pastoralists and village savings groups through the development of last-mile agent networks. Prior to the current crisis, Ebdaa bank's portfolio did not include cash delivery services and Ebdaa had not worked with any agency to deliver cash assistance. The crisis therefore presented an opportunity for Mercy Corps and Ebdaa to pilot the delivery of MPCA to meet the essential needs of communities given the lack of capacity among other FSPs

Distribution dates and locations were communicated to target recipients by community leaders and security assessments were conducted in coordination with local authorities and locality leaders in the target localities. Each locality was allocated 2 days for the distributions and community members were informed which day to attend to avoid crowding at the distribution sites. So far, 1,517 HHs have been reached in Gedaref state. Registration and verification of households is currently taking place in South Kordofan to ensure that vulnerable households are reached in the state. Unfortunately, due to the security situation in South Darfur, the activity has been suspended in the state due to access challenges.

SCOPE OF THE FINAL EVALUATION

Main Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of this assignment is to evaluate program achievements towards meeting the objectives and targets and to assess relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability of the program at program end. The evaluation will also generate recommendations for future programming. The information will be used for public presentations and learning, for sharing with government line ministries, local stakeholders and private sector partners, and for promotion of services in the community, as well as identifying possibilities for project replication. The results from the independent evaluation will also support Mercy Corps' agency-level learning, by documenting and explaining why planned activities succeeded or failed. The final evaluation is expected to establish plausible links between program inputs and outcomes and results and draw lessons for improvement of future agricultural development or similar future activities. More specifically, the evaluation will be guided by the questions below.

1. *Effectiveness and Efficiency of Interventions and Intervention Implementation:* To what extent did the interventions consider the differential vulnerability by gender equity, protection, age, physical and emotional challenges of the participants, and risks to participation in various interventions in project design and implementation?
2. *Intended and Unintended outcomes:* What evidence exists that the program has influenced, in any way, changes in the household coping and adaptive capacities in the course of recurring conflicts and displacements. How and through what mechanisms has the program influenced, if at all, other stated program objectives (e.g. improved WASH committees, improved health knowledge, etc). Include expected and unexpected, positive and negative – what factors facilitated or inhibited these changes?
3. *Assess the contribution of specific interventions in improving household food security, WASH, livelihood and resilience outcomes:* How have the mass sensitization sessions; WASH committees sessions and training, contributed to improved knowledge and access of respondents to WASH facilities, clean water, Health, etc.? To what extent have seed distributions and climate smart training improved food security and resilience of targeted households? To what extent was Mercy Corps able to meet the diverse range of needs of vulnerable food insecure households through cash transfer? Estimate what might have happened to the population had they NOT received the cash transfers (using evidence from other programs to support this).
4. *Collaborations:* What is the level of satisfaction of key stakeholders including government departments, food security clusters, cash working groups, WASH clusters, participants, and others regarding their inclusion and participation in the BRIDGE program?
5. *Leverage and Layering:* To what extent did the project leverage existing other USG and non-USG investments in the same space to facilitate linkages with complementary services, layering with earlier investments, and implementing an exit strategy to minimize

the dependency on external assistance. How likely is it that the WASH and food security interventions will be sustained one year post project? Why?

It is expected that the above questions will be adjusted in collaboration with the consulting firm during the inception phase of the assignment.

Key deliverables:

The consulting firm is expected to provide a means of answering the evaluation questions using both qualitative and quantitative. The consulting firm will also specify in their proposal, means of data-collection, data analysis and provide the sampling strategy. Key deliverables will include:

An inception report detailing agreed upon process and methodologies to be employed to answer the evaluation questions.

- Design qualitative and quantitative data framework and tools: The external consulting firm is expected to conduct a mixed methods evaluation using tools and a work plan that she/he/they have developed and have been approved by the Country MEL Manager prior to the start of the evaluation. Data collection shall involve visits to a sample of project locations, meetings with program partners, targeted participants and other key stakeholders. The consulting firm will lead the qualitative and quantitative data collection, including supervising data collection teams, and completing the analysis within the approved timeline.
 - Qualitative: The qualitative component of the final evaluation must capture lessons learned and best practices through a variety of qualitative methods. The evaluation team will design the overall qualitative study approach and should consider a variety of primary data collection methods, including semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. The evaluation team leader and members will be responsible for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Data will be collected from key stakeholders through interviews, discussions, consultative processes, and observations.
 - Quantitative: The final evaluation will include primary data collection and analysis of quantitative survey data. The tools will be designed by the consulting firm including all field related operations - from hiring and training of enumerators and testing of tools.
- The consulting firm is expected to carry out the following tasks and to produce a comprehensive final evaluation report.
 - Recruit, train, and oversee the work of Enumerators.
 - Prepare the draft evaluation report.
 - Conduct in-country presentation of findings to Mercy Corps

- Prepare final evaluation report and presentation.
- A single brief of 4-5 pages summarizing key findings and program achievements.

Below is an overview of the activities, their duration, and the stakeholders responsible. The duration/Level of Effort included is an estimate and applicants are expected to indicate proposed levels of effort.

Duration	Activity	Stakeholder
Week 1 <i>5 Working days</i>	Review draft evaluation SOW with the external evaluator to clarify timeframe and available budget	External evaluator, Program Managers, Program Director, MEL manager, PAQ manager
	Undertake desk review of the relevant program documents that include the Proposals, Implementation Plans, Revised Program designs and timelines, Program Implementation Reports, Mercy Corps strategy documents, Post distribution monitoring reports, Assessment reports and any other relevant documents. Develop an inception report detailing the process and methodologies to be employed to answer the evaluation questions. This should include all evaluation tools, and important time schedules for this exercise, and be presented to Mercy Corps for review and further inputs before going to the field.	External evaluator
	Review and provide feedback to inception report and tools for external evaluator to incorporate	Program Managers, Program Director, MEL manager, PAQ manager

	With input from Mercy Corps program team and MEL teams, develop data collection tools and translate them as appropriate	External evaluator
Week 2-4 15 working days	Train Enumerators/Surveyors; Pre-test data collection instruments	External evaluator/MEL Officer
	Finalize data collection instruments	External evaluator
	Oversee data collection	External evaluator
Week 6 & 8 15 working days	Encode and Analyze data	External evaluator
	Prepare draft evaluation report	External evaluator
	Provide detailed feedback to draft report	Program Managers, Program Director, MEL manager, PAQ manager
	Finalize report, produce presentation of findings, and share back with MC (Not more 30 pages – all other additions can be included as Annexes)	External evaluator

Mercy Corps' country Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team as well as the BRIDGE program MEL team will be available to work directly with the consulting firm throughout the duration of the assignment and to answer any question as they emerge.

Report Structure & Content:

- **Cover Page, List of Acronyms**
- **Table of Contents**

- **Executive Summary:** This section should be a clear and concise stand-alone document that gives readers the essential contents of the evaluation report, including a summary of major findings, lessons learned, and recommendations.
- **Methodology:** This section should be sufficiently detailed to help the reader judge the accuracy of the report and its findings.
- **Limitations:** This section should address constraints and limitations of the methodology, and the implications of these limitations for the findings, including whether and why any of the evaluation findings are inconclusive.
- **Results:** This section should provide a clear assessment of progress with respect to indicators / targets / objectives and/or evaluation questions, production of indicator estimates with tables showing the indicators, BL/EL indicator values.
- **Synthesis, Recommendations and Lessons Learned:** This is space for the evaluation team to think about the data and results and make concrete recommendations for current or future program improvements, pull out organization lessons learned, and generally comment on data and results. Everything presented in this section should be directly linked back to the information presented in the Results section of the report.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Disclose any conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest, including the interest of program staff in having a successful program.
- **Annexes:** These should include a complete file of data collection instruments in English, list of stakeholder groups with number and type of interactions; SOW, qualitative protocols developed and used, any data sets (these can be provided in electronic format), any required photos, participant profiles or other special documentation needed.

The following are the key deadlines for the report:

- First draft report to be submitted by 22nd Feb 2024 .
- Mercy Corps will review the draft report and provide feedback no later than 29th Feb 2024.
- Final report, incorporating feedback, will be due on 5th March 2024.

Timeframe / Schedule:

It is expected that the consulting firm is available to start on 5th Jan 2024, with an initial meeting with the key team members from Mercy Corps. The consulting firm will then work until 5th March 2024, during which, the final evaluation report (adjusted according to Mercy Corps' feedback) is to be shared. It is expected that the consulting firm will work for **an estimated 40 working days (excluding weekends)** between 5th Jan 2024 and 5th March, 2024. (Both days inclusive).

The invoice for services should be provided to Mercy Corps immediately after the delivery of the final evaluation report (due 5th March 2024).

The Consulting firm will report to:

Mercy Corps Sudan Country MEL Manager

The Consulting firm will work closely with:

Mercy Corps' MEL Manager, Program Managers, CASH advisor and Field Team Leaders.

Required Experience & Skills:

The following are the qualifications and experiences the consulting firm should possess:

- Strong experience conducting research exercises in support of major humanitarian programs – preferably in food and nutrition security – in challenging operational environments, previous experience in Sudan is desirable.
- A strong approach to assuring quality assurance of data collected.
- A strong ethical approach to data collection – while still being able to meet the objectives of the consultancy.
- Demonstrable experience in leading evaluations of humanitarian programs responding to major disasters, with specific emphasis on food security and protection in emergencies.
- Knowledge of strategic and operational management of humanitarian operations and proven ability to provide strategic recommendations to key stakeholders.
- Strong analytical skills and ability to clearly synthesize and present findings, draw practical conclusions, make recommendations and to prepare well-written reports in a timely manner.
- Demonstrated experience in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques, especially in emergency operations.
- Data visualization skills are highly desirable.
- Experience with evaluation of USAID-funded projects is highly desirable.
- Experience, knowledge, and clear understanding of Sudan humanitarian context.
- Good interpersonal skills and understanding of cultural sensitivities.

Assessment and award of the assignment

Mercy Corps will evaluate technical and financial proposals and award the assignment based on technical and financial feasibility. Mercy Corps reserves the right to accept or reject one or all proposals received without assigning any reason and is not bound to accept the lowest or the highest bidder. Only those shortlisted **will be contacted**. **Submission deadline for the technical and financial proposal is before COB 5th Dec 2023.**

Any subcontracting under this evaluation consultancy will not be accepted.