Union Aid

Malteser International
Order of Malta Worldwide Relief

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Independent External Midterm Evaluation

Project Title	Accessible and Integrated Health, Nutrition, WASH Life-Saving Services for Vulnerable IDPs, Returnees, Especially Women and Girls, and Afghan Host Communities inside Afghanistan
Project Reference	S09-51-AFG/AFG/MaltInt/2026/01
Donor	German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO)
Applicant / Implementing Partner	Malteser International (MI) / Union Aid
Project Duration	1 December 2025 – 31 December 2027
Evaluation Period	1 December 2025 – December 2026
Geographical Coverage	Balkh Province, Afghanistan
Contracting Organization	Union Aid, in coordination with Malteser International

1. Background and Project Overview

Union Aid is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization established in 1979, with experience implementing more than 80 humanitarian and development projects across Afghanistan in health, nutrition, WASH, education, food security, and emergency assistance. In partnership with Malteser International, Union Aid is implementing a project from 1 December 2025 to 31 December 2027 to improve access to essential healthcare, prevent and treat acute malnutrition, and address water, sanitation, and hygiene needs.

The project supports six Basic Health Centers (BHCs) in Balkh Province: Baba Yadgar, Joghdak, Gozar Panjsher, Karte Khorasan, Karte Nawshad, and Yolmarab. It targets internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and vulnerable host communities, with particular attention to women, girls, children, older people, and persons with disabilities.

The project comprises three main outputs:

Output 1: Improved Access to Essential Health Services

Delivery of primary healthcare through six Basic Health Centers, including maternal and child health, MHPSS, NCD management, community outreach, referrals, health worker capacity building, and essential medicines and supplies.

Output 2: Improved Access to Quality Nutrition Services

Screening and treatment of acute malnutrition among children under five, nutrition services for pregnant and lactating women, infant and young child feeding counselling, specialized nutritious foods, and health worker capacity building.

Output 3: Improved Access to Emergency WASH Services

Provision of safe drinking water through well chlorination, hygiene promotion, WASH supplies, and maintenance of sanitation facilities.

2. Purpose and Objectives

The evaluation will independently assess project progress, performance, and emerging results across health, nutrition, and WASH, identify implementation challenges, and recommend practical improvements and corrective actions during the remaining project period.

It will assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, progress against targets, inclusion, safeguarding, accountability, coordination, and sustainability; identify good practices and lessons; and recommend actions to help achieve project targets by 31 December 2027.

3. Scope and Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation covers implementation from 1 December 2025 to December 2026 across all three outputs and the six supported BHCs. The exact cutoff date for the midterm evaluation will be November 31,2026.

Health Services: availability, access, utilization and quality of primary, maternal and child health, immunization, NCD and MHPSS services; staffing, medicines, referrals, outreach, HMIS, infection prevention and patient safety.

Nutrition Services: screening, treatment and referral of SAM/MAM cases; services for pregnant and lactating women; IYCF counselling, supplies, coverage and quality.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): progress towards the target of chlorinating 530 wells; water safety, hygiene promotion, WASH supplies, sanitation, committee functionality, community practices and sustainability.

Cross-cutting and management: gender, disability and other vulnerable groups, protection/PSEAH, complaints and feedback, community participation, conflict sensitivity, humanitarian principles, environmental considerations, coordination, work plan/log frame progress, staffing, procurement, monitoring, reporting and risk management.

Criterion	Focus
Relevance and coherence	Fit with community needs, national priorities, humanitarian standards, and other services.
Effectiveness	Progress against outputs, outcomes, indicators and targets; factors enabling or constraining delivery.
Efficiency and value for money	Use of human, financial, material and technical resources relative to progress and results.
Emerging outcomes and sustainability	Changes in access, utilization and well-being; prospects for service continuity and WASH functionality.
Service quality and accessibility	Availability, safety, quality, staffing, supplies, referrals and access for vulnerable groups.
Inclusion, protection and accountability	Gender responsiveness, safeguarding/PSEAH, participation and accessible feedback mechanisms.
Coordination and management	Coordination, monitoring, reporting, data quality and corrective action.

4. Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluator will assess the project against the following key questions, which may be refined during the inception phase.

4.1 Relevance

1. Do project interventions address the needs of target communities, particularly vulnerable groups?
2. Are services aligned with community priorities, national requirements, and humanitarian standards?

4.2 Effectiveness

1. What progress has been made against project targets, indicators, and planned activities?
2. What factors have facilitated or constrained implementation?
3. What actions are needed to achieve the remaining targets by December 2027?

4.3 Health and Nutrition Service Quality

1. Are health and nutrition services accessible, adequately staffed, properly equipped, and delivered according to relevant standards?
2. Are essential medicines, nutrition supplies, referrals, and community outreach functioning effectively?
3. What barriers affect service access, particularly for women and vulnerable groups?

4.4 WASH Performance

1. What progress has been made towards well chlorination and hygiene promotion targets?
2. Are water and sanitation facilities functional, and are communities applying recommended hygiene practices?
3. What measures are needed to improve sustainability?

4.5 Inclusion, Protection and Accountability

1. Are services inclusive, safe, and accessible to vulnerable groups?
2. Are safeguarding, PSEAH, confidentiality, and protection measures applied?
3. Are feedback and complaints mechanisms accessible and effective, and is community feedback used to improve services?

The evaluator must not investigate individual safeguarding allegations or collect identifiable details of sensitive complaints. Any concerns identified must follow established reporting and referral procedures.

4.6 Coordination and Sustainability

1. Is coordination between Union Aid, Malteser International, authorities, and humanitarian actors effective?
2. Are monitoring systems reliable and supporting decision-making?
3. What measures can strengthen service continuity and sustainability?
4. What should be prioritized during the remaining project period?

5. Evaluation Methodology

A mixed-methods approach will combine desk review, quantitative and qualitative analysis, facility/community visits, beneficiary feedback, and triangulation. The agency/team will propose and justify the sample, methods and tools in the inception report; Union Aid and MI must approve these before fieldwork.

Desk review: proposal, log frame, work plan, reports, HMIS/nutrition and WASH data, budget utilization, monitoring, training records and relevant standards.

Quantitative analysis: indicators, service utilization, outcomes, WASH achievements and budget use; assess data quality and disaggregate by sex, age, disability, displacement status and location where possible.

Qualitative data: interviews and focus groups with Union Aid/MI staff, health workers, authorities, community members, service users and WASH committees, including women and vulnerable groups.

Visits and feedback: assess all six BHCs and selected health posts/communities, subject to access; examine service availability, supplies, quality, accessibility, referrals, WASH functionality and user experience.

Triangulation: compare documents, routine data, interviews, group discussions, observations and feedback; identify data gaps and distinguish verified evidence from perceptions. Do not claim statistical representativeness unless supported by the sample design.

6. Deliverables and Indicative Timeline

Deliverable	Required content
1. Inception report	Refined questions/matrix, methodology, sample, tools, analysis plan, consultation and fieldwork schedule, ethics/safeguarding, data quality, limitations and report outline. Approval required before fieldwork.
2. Preliminary findings	Debrief of initial findings, strengths, gaps and issues requiring verification.
3. Draft report	Evidence-based findings, analysis, conclusions, lessons and practical recommendations for review.
4. Final report	Concise report incorporating relevant feedback, findings against criteria/outputs, conclusions, lessons, prioritized recommendations and annexes.
5. Management response/action plan	Prioritized actions, responsibilities, deadlines, resources and follow-up indicators, developed with Union Aid and MI.
6. Findings presentation	Presentation of conclusions, recommendations and priority actions for the remaining project period.

The evaluation is expected to be completed within approximately **25–27 working days**, including preparation, fieldwork, analysis, reporting, and presentation.
The final schedule will be agreed with the selected agency/team and adjusted to the security situation and operational requirements.

Activity	Indicative duration
Contract initiation and document review	3 working days
Development and submission of inception report	3 working days
Review and approval of inception report and tools	2 working days
Fieldwork and data collection	8 working days
Data analysis and preparation of draft report	5 working days
Review of draft report by Union Aid and Malteser International	3 working days
Finalization of report and presentation of findings	3 working days
Total indicative duration	**27 working days**

The timeline may be adjusted according to the agreed methodology, sample size, geographical coverage, access conditions, and feedback requirements.

7. Agency/team Qualifications and Team

The agency/team must be independent and experienced in humanitarian evaluations, preferably integrated health, nutrition and WASH projects in Afghanistan or similar contexts. It should demonstrate expertise in mixed methods, OECD-DAC criteria, analysis, service quality, gender, inclusion, accountability and safeguarding; strong English reporting; and ability to deploy qualified Afghan researchers and female data collectors as needed. Conflicts of interest must be declared.

The proposed team must cover the following competencies: (i) Team Leader with relevant advanced qualification and at least seven years of evaluation/research experience; (ii) health and nutrition expertise; (iii) WASH expertise; and (iv) quantitative/qualitative research, data analysis, quality assurance and data protection. Alternative team structures are acceptable if all competencies are covered.

8. Ethics, Independence and Quality Assurance

The agency/team must ensure informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, secure data management, respectful consultation and additional safeguards for children and vulnerable participants. Obtain consent for photographs, recordings and quotations; minimize sensitive data; and never link participation to assistance. Safeguarding concerns must follow established procedures.

The evaluator independently controls methodology, collection, analysis, findings and recommendations. Union Aid and MI may facilitate access and review deliverables for factual accuracy and completeness without compromising independence. Limitations, data-quality concerns and differing perspectives must be transparently documented.

9. Roles and Reporting

1. **Union Aid:** Coordinate the evaluation; facilitate access to documents, facilities, communities and stakeholders; consolidate feedback; support validation and management follow-up.
2. **Malteser International:** Provide technical guidance and relevant program/financial information; review deliverables and participate in validation and follow-up.
3. **Evaluation agency/team:** Conduct the evaluation independently, recruit qualified staff, ensure ethical and, Data quality standards, and submit evidence-based deliverables on time.

The agency/team will report to Union Aid's designated focal person in coordination with MI. All deliverables must be in English, concise, analytical and suitable for program management and donor reporting.

10. Confidentiality and Ownership

All reports, datasets, evaluation tools, analytical outputs, and presentations developed under this assignment must be submitted to Union Aid and Malteser International (MI). All deliverables and project-specific materials produced under the assignment shall be jointly owned by Union Aid and MI, unless otherwise agreed in writing.

The evaluation agency/team must securely manage all project-related information and protect personal and confidential data. Anonymized datasets, tools, and analytical outputs may be used or shared for other purposes only with prior written authorization from Union Aid and MI. The agency/team must not publish,

disclose, or share project information without prior written authorization, except where legally required or permitted under agreed safeguarding procedures.

11. Application and Selection

Interested agencies/teams must submit technical and financial proposals by the deadline stated in Union Aid's request for proposals. The technical proposal must include understanding of the assignment, methodology and sampling, work plan, team/CVs, relevant experience and references, quality/ethical/data-protection measures, and conflict-of-interest disclosure. The itemized financial proposal must cover fees, fieldwork, travel, accommodation, data collection, translation and other relevant costs, and state team availability, start date and duration.

Selection criterion	Weight
Understanding of assignment and context	10%
Methodology	25%
Organizational experience	15%
Team qualifications and experience	20%
Work plan, quality assurance and ethics	10%
Financial proposal/value for money	20%
Total	**100%**

Union Aid may adjust the scoring framework in line with procurement procedures and donor requirements.

12. Budget, Payment and Use of Findings

The evaluation will be financed from the approved project budget. The contract value, applicable taxes, and payment terms will be agreed with the selected agency/team.

Payments will be made in accordance with the following schedule, subject to the satisfactory completion and formal acceptance of each corresponding deliverable by Union Aid, in coordination with Malteser International (MI):

1. **20%** upon formal acceptance of the inception report.
2. **30%** upon completion of fieldwork and formal acceptance of the preliminary findings.
3. **30%** upon formal acceptance of the draft evaluation report.
4. **20%** upon formal acceptance of the final report and completion of the findings presentation.

Union Aid and MI will use the evaluation findings to assess project progress, address implementation gaps and risks, improve service quality and access, strengthen accountability and coordination, guide resource allocation, and document lessons learned. Recommendations should be prioritized according to urgency, feasibility, and expected impact and inform a time-bound corrective-action plan to support achievement of project targets by 31 December 2027.

13. Approval

These ToR guide recruitment of an independent external evaluation agency. Union Aid and Malteser International will agree on the final ToR, methodology, schedule and deliverables before contract award.