



Terms of Reference

Final Evaluation of a 5-year McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project in Malawi

Implementer: Nascent Solutions Inc. (Nascent)

Funder: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Location: Central and Southern regions of Malawi

Period for the evaluation: Around January-June 2024.

Purpose of this Terms of Reference (ToR): To introduce and solicit bids for a final evaluation for Nascent's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project in Malawi.

Project Description

This is a five-year project funded under USDA's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Implemented by Nascent, the project is designed to improve the literacy of school-age children and increase the use of good health and dietary practices. The project runs from October 2019 to September 2024.

The staple activity is the provision of a daily breakfast and periodic take-home rations (THR) using food commodities provided by USDA. The specific project objectives are:

- Improve the quality of literacy instruction, through more consistent teacher attendance, better teaching and learning materials, and training of teachers and administrators;
- Increase student attentiveness, through extracurricular activities, and the daily school meals program;
- Increase student attendance, through school infrastructure improvements, enrolment outreaches, an increased community understanding of education benefits, and reducing health related absences;
- Increase the use of good health and dietary practices, through training on hygiene, safe food storage and preparation, provision of clean water and sanitation services;
- Increase use of improved farming practices, climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices and postharvest management techniques;
- Improve engagement of stakeholder capacity through training in good governance practices.

The project benefits nearly 500,000 students and their families, teachers, administrators, civil servants, parent-teacher association members, in the 106 schools in the Central and Southern regions. Nascent is working in close collaboration with the Government lead by the titular agency, the Ministry of Education (MoE) as well as the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP); Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources (MoAENR); and Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW). Other

implementing partners include World Vision Malawi, Kansas State University, and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR).

Purpose and Target Audience

The final evaluation will inform Nascent, USDA, the Government of Malawi, implementation partners, and other stakeholders on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the program. Nascent will use the results to 1) assess progress in project implementation; 2) reassess Nascent’s theory of change; 3) document lessons learned; 4) emphasize the most viable sustainability paths to stakeholders; and 5) provide evidence for future McGovern-Dole and school feeding projects in Malawi.

Research Questions

| Criteria | Questions | Suggested Methodology (pending evaluator advice) |
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| <p>Impact</p> | <p>Of the below, which changes are attributable to the project? What is the magnitude of those changes?</p> <p>MGD SO1: What is the percentage of students who, by the end of two grades and four grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text in English and Chichewa?</p> <p>MGD 1.1: What is the percentage of teachers engaged in “active instruction” for 50%+ of classroom time?</p> <p>MGD 1.2: What is the percentage of classroom time in which >5 students are “off-task”?</p> <p>MGD 1.3: What is the average student attendance rate in Nascent-supported classrooms/schools?</p> <p>MGD SO2: What is the percentage of school-age children observed correctly washing their hands?</p> <p>MGD SO2: What is the prevalence of women of reproductive age consuming a diet of minimum diversity?</p> <p>MGD SO2 / 1.3.2: What percentage of parents and teachers report poor health as the most important reason for student absences from school?</p> | <p>Several of these Key Questions require disaggregation by sex and/or age. Evaluators will utilize Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA), the Stallings Classroom Observation System (SOS), dietary diversity surveys, and handwashing observations, among other tools. These tools were also used during baseline and midterm studies.</p> |

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| | MGD SO2 / 2.3: What percentage of parents practice promoted infant and young child feeding (IYCF) behaviors? | |
| Effectiveness | <p>For a sample of approximately 10 randomly selected indicators, what level of progress has been made against the baseline and against targets?</p> <p>What are the nutrition knowledge, attitudes, and practices of women of reproductive age (15-49 years)?</p> <p>What are the students' knowledge, attitudes and practices in terms of hygiene?</p> <p>What are community members' knowledge, attitudes, and practices on Early Childhood Development Centers' existence, relevance and functionality in their area?</p> <p>What are community members' knowledge, attitudes, and practices on improved farming practices including climate-smart agriculture, postharvest loss reduction, intercropping, and crop diversification?</p> | Conduct a desk review of the Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), baseline survey report, target figures, associated databases, and semi-annual reports |
| Relevance / Coherence | <p>Is the project's results framework consistent with stakeholder and beneficiary views of the best pathways to improve student literacy?</p> <p>Is implementation consistent with 1) lessons from the USAID-funded Professional Teacher Development Support (MPTDS) program, 2) the National Reading Program, 3) the National Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan 2018–2022, and 4) the School Health and Nutrition Guidelines? Is the project causing any unintended effects?</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct key informant interviews and semi-structured focus group discussions among teachers, PTA members, Standard 7 and 8 students, and education and school feeding officials in government. 2. Conduct key informant interviews among Nascent staff and partners. |
| Efficiency | <p>Was the project implemented as planned (timeline and budget)?</p> <p>Which outputs were obtained most cost-efficiently? Which were obtained least cost-efficiently?</p> <p>Were there internal and external factors hindering efficient implementation of project activities?</p> | Conduct key informant interviews among Nascent staff. |

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| Sustainability | <p>Are efforts at sustainability likely to succeed? Which activities are likely to continue as the project closes?</p> <p>How is the local community contributing to sustain project activities, especially school feeding?</p> <p>Has the government (at any level) increased its financial support for school feeding?</p> <p>Has the private sector contributed to school feeding sustainability efforts?</p> | <p>Conduct key informant interviews and semi-structured focus group discussions regarding Nascent’s school graduation model among teachers, PTA members, Standard 7 and 8 students, and education and school feeding officials in government.</p> |
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Study Design

The evaluators will continue to use a repeat, cross-sectional, quasi-experimental impact study design setup during the baseline survey and continued during the midterm evaluation, preferably using school-level propensity score matching, principal component analysis, and/or a difference-in-differences analysis method, as appropriate.

The evaluators will mimic the cluster sampling strategy and size of the baseline and midterm studies (see “How to Apply” section below), with schools as the primary sampling unit, and students/classrooms/parents as the secondary sampling unit, depending on the key question. Stratification must occur at the regional level.

The final evaluation will utilize the same data collection tools as the baseline and midterm studies. Qualitative data will be collected at project schools only, in a continuation of data collection initiated at baseline.

Qualitative sampling will be purposive, seeking a broad representation of viewpoints. Data will be collected using focus groups and/or key informant interviews targeting local stakeholders such as parents, head teachers, teachers, older students, and education and other government officers. Nascent and the evaluators will jointly agree on stakeholders who should be interviewed, accompany enumerators to schools, or attend a dissemination workshop. Evaluators will also take advice from stakeholder key informants about other possible key informants. Analysis will identify key themes.

Deliverables and Timeline

| Deliverable | Deadline (tentative) |
|--|----------------------|
| <p>Evaluation work plan / inception report, explaining how evaluators will operationalize the evaluation in question (design, methodology, ethics plan, quality assurance plan, training agendas, etc.), to be submitted after a desk review and consultations with Nascent. This inception report will include the survey tools, focus group discussion protocols and/or key informant interview questions.</p> | <p>January 2024</p> |
| <p>Approval of application for research permission from NCRSH</p> | <p>February 2024</p> |

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| Informal preliminary analysis for key Impact questions only | April 2024 |
| Report: A concise written narrative (section 508 compliant) | May 2024 |
| Stand-alone 5-page briefing on the evaluation in question. This is viewed as a polished and widely accessible executive summary. It will allow Nascent and USDA to easily disseminate content | May 2024 |
| Presentation: Maximum of 50 PowerPoint slides highlighting key themes of the report. Delivery of slides at a national-level workshop with senior stakeholders in attendance. | June 2024 |
| Clean datasets in .csv | June 2024 |

Outline for the report

1. Cover page
2. Table of contents
3. List of acronyms
4. Executive summary including the background, key findings, conclusions and recommendations
5. Introduction and objectives of the evaluation
6. Research design including key indicators
7. Methodology including data sources, quality insurance measures (including inter-rater reliability measures), data limitations, and timeline of evaluation implementation
8. Study findings, with personally identifiable information removed
9. Conclusion based on the findings
10. Limitations includes any constraints of the evaluation
11. Recommendations based on the conclusions
12. References
13. Annexes (list of data sources including interviews, data collection tools etc.)

Existing Data and Performance Information

Nascent will make the following available to the evaluators:

- Baseline survey report and datasets
- Midterm evaluation survey report and datasets
- Evaluation Plan
- Performance Monitoring Plan
- Results Framework
- Work plans
- Semi-annual reports

Profile of Evaluation Team

Evaluators are welcome to assemble a team as they see fit. Their skills should be complementary, with one identified as the Team Lead, who will bear responsibility for all work products and processes. Firms and groups of independent consultants are welcome to apply. Combined, the team should have the following skills and attributes:

- Demonstrated experience leading complex impact evaluations.
- Demonstrated expertise in study design and sampling.
- Demonstrated experience in the development of quantitative data collection tools and managing field data using Survey CTO and Tangerine for digital data collection.
- Demonstrated experience in using qualitative methods such as focus groups and key informant interviews.
- Demonstrated experience in data management and analysis using statistical software, including analyzing complex (multi-stage cluster samples) surveys.
- Demonstrated experience using propensity score matching, principal component analysis, and difference-in-differences analysis techniques.
- Demonstrated experience in concise, illuminating report writing, including data visualization.
- Demonstrated experience in training and managing field data collectors and complex logistics.
- Subject matter expertise in literacy and education.
- Subject matter expertise in maternal nutrition, child nutrition, and hygiene.
- Strong teamwork ability across cultures and time zones.
- Demonstrated cultural sensitivity and gender balance to effectively communicate with a variety of stakeholders, ranging from young students to government officials.
- Experience using local data collectors and involving project stakeholders in the evaluation.
- Experience with EGRA.
- Experience with the Stallings Classroom Observation system.
- Experience with dietary diversity surveys.
- Experience with observation of agricultural practices.
- Experience with USDA McGovern-Dole projects.
- Experience in Malawi or the region.
- High proficiency in written and verbal English.

How to Apply

Interested evaluators should apply by submitting the following documents in a single PDF no later than 31 October 2023. Submissions must be made via e-mail to admin@nascents.org with the subject line “Nascent Solutions-Malawi final evaluation bid”.

1. Organizational/team capacity statement outlining relevant evaluation experience and ability to perform the evaluation with methodological rigor. This should be a maximum of 5 pages.
2. CV of each proposed evaluator with his/her role clearly identified. Please limit CVs to no more than 3 pages per person.
3. Financial proposal that includes (in US dollars or Malawian kwacha):
 1. Daily consulting fee and days of work required for each team member
 2. Estimated expenses attributable to each team member.

These parameters may be useful when constructing your financial proposal:

- The baseline and midterm studies reached 36 intervention schools (30 primary plus 6 ECD), and 30 primary comparison schools.
- See below the sample sizes achieved during the baseline and midterm studies.

| Key Questions | Baseline total sample (intervention + comparison) | Midterm total sample (intervention + comparison) |
|--|---|--|
| MGD SO1: What is the percentage of students who, by the end of two grades and four grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text in English and Chichewa? | 2,400 Standard 2 and 4 students | 2,830 Standard 2 and 4 students |
| MGD 1.1: What is the percentage of teachers engaged in “active instruction” for 50%+ of classroom time? | 363 Standard 1-8 classrooms | 410 Standard 1-8 classrooms |
| MGD 1.2: What is the percentage of classroom time in which >5 students are “off-task”? | 363 Standard 1-8 classrooms | 410 Standard 1-8 classrooms |
| MGD 1.3: What is the average student attendance rate in USDA supported classrooms/schools? | Analysis of registers at 66 schools | Analysis of registers at 54 schools |
| MGD SO2: What is the percentage of school-age children observed correctly washing their hands? | 600 student observations | 720 student observations |
| MGD SO2: What is the prevalence of women of reproductive age consuming a diet of minimum diversity? | 1,285 women | 1,213 women |
| MGD SO2 / 1.3.2: What percentage of parents and teachers report poor health as the most important reason for student absences from school? | 1,285 women; 363 teachers | 1,213 women; 410 teachers |
| MGD SO2 / 2.3: What percentage of parents practice promoted infant and young child feeding behaviors? | 1,285 women | 1,213 women |

- The baseline conducted 50 key informant interviews of government staff, Nascent staff, and other stakeholders, while the midterm study relied on 59 KII.
- The baseline interviewed 100 people through focus group discussions, while the midterm relied on 100 participants through 24 FGD.
- Nascent requires the sampling strategy to allow for comparisons between male and female students, as well as two age categories for some Key Impact Questions.
- Data collection will occur in Chichewa and English, and other local languages when necessary. Deliverables are in English.
- Nascent will arrange and directly pay for mobile data collection subscriptions to Tangerine and SurveyCTO.
- If necessary, Nascent will provide some logistical support, especially facilitating introductions to schools and stakeholders.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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Appendix: Project Results Framework



