Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC):
Evaluation of Responsive Research Mechanism

Terms of Reference: 1 October 2020

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

OVERVIEW

We are <u>Elrha</u>. A global organisation that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation. We are an established actor in the humanitarian community, working in partnership with humanitarian organisations, researchers, innovators, and the private sector to tackle some of the most difficult challenges facing people all over the world. We have supported more than 200 world-class research studies and innovation projects, championing new ideas and different approaches to evidence what works in humanitarian response.

Elrha has two successful humanitarian programmes; <u>Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises</u> (R2HC) and the <u>Humanitarian Innovation Fund</u> (HIF).

The R2HC programme aims to improve health outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions. This globally recognised research programme focuses on maximising the potential for public health research to bring about positive change in humanitarian response and helps inform decision making in humanitarian response. Since it was established in 2013, it has funded more than 80 research studies across a range of public health fields, bringing together researchers and humanitarian practitioners to undertake vital research.

The HIF programme improves outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by identifying, nurturing and sharing more effective and scalable solutions. The HIF is a globally recognised programme leading on the development and testing of innovation in the

1

humanitarian system. Established in 2011, it was the first of its kind: an independent, grant-making programme open to the entire humanitarian community. It now leads the way in funding, supporting, and managing innovation at every stage of the process. The HIF's portfolio of funded projects has informed a more detailed understanding of what successful innovation looks like, and what it can achieve for the humanitarian community. This work is leading the global conversation on innovation in humanitarian response.

R2HC RESPONSIVE RESEARCH MECHANISM

Elrha's R2HC programme was established in 2013 to increase the evidence base for public health response in humanitarian crises. Funded initially by DFID and Wellcome, the UK government's National Institute of Health Research became a third donor for the programme in 2018. The R2HC manages annual calls for research proposals, of which there have been 7 since 2013. Through the annual calls more than 45 studies have been funded addressing a range of public health issues. The grants vary in length from 2 – 4 years.

Additionally, through our Responsive Mechanism, the R2HC supports rapid research in response to unforeseen humanitarian crises or disease outbreaks. The main objective of such research is for the findings to contribute in real time to the humanitarian response in question. In line with R2HC annual call objectives[1], there is a secondary objective of generating findings to influence future responses of a similar nature, or to add to the body of evidence in a particular context. Grants are usually 3 -9 months duration.

To date four responsive research calls have been launched in response humanitarian crises: the 2014 West African Ebola crisis; the 2017 food and nutrition crisis in the Horn of Africa; the 2019 Ebola crisis in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo; and, in 2020, to support the Covid-19 response in humanitarian settings.

Critical to the Responsive Mechanism is that the processes need to be quick and efficient to ensure that the research can start as soon as possible. Building on experience gained from the 2014 Ebola call soon after the R2HC had been established, processes related to the Responsive Mechanism have been fine-tuned following each subsequent call. These revised processes aim to ensure the identification of critical humanitarian crises where real-time research findings can be used to inform humanitarian response, and that systems are in place to ensure speed and efficiency for the application, review, due diligence and contracting processes, enabling us to fund the best quality research proposals.

The responsive call to support the Covid-19 response in humanitarian settings was launched in March 2020, generating more interest than any call previously launched through the R2HC, with 465 applications received. Of these, 81 applications were eligible, and 15 studies were approved for funding. Following this most recent responsive call, internal lessons have been learned though not yet documented.

The R2HC is entering a fourth phase of funding, with the Responsive Mechanism foreseen to play a critical role in generating rapid research over the next 4 years. We are commissioning an external evaluation of the mechanism to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Comparing our processes with those used by other rapid research mechanisms, we seek to identify existing good practice that might inform and improve our own approach and systems. We are also interested to explore why it has sometimes proved difficult for research teams to fully deliver on their expected outcomes within the foreseen 'rapid' time frames.

---

[1] See Annex 1 Criteria for triggering a responsive call

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

<u>PURPOSE</u>

Elrha is commissioning a process evaluation of the R2HC Responsive Mechanism with a view to understanding whether current systems are fit for purpose or need modification. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be used to inform the future working of the Responsive Mechanism. The outcomes of research funded through this modality - the quality of research funded and its impact on humanitarian response - will not be evaluated.

<u>OBJECTIVES</u>

The evaluation will overall be guided by the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Focusing on the three most recent responsive calls[2], the evaluation will examine processes related to the Responsive Mechanism to determine the extent to which they are fit for purpose, and will learn lessons from rapid research mechanisms used by other research funders. Three key areas will be addressed through the evaluation:

1. Fidelity: does the Responsive Mechanism fulfil its purpose efficiently and effectively? This will include examining whether Elrha: identifies humanitarian crises where there is the best possible chance of research findings having real time impact; reaches those best positioned to deliver quality research that will be conducted in challenging humanitarian crisis settings; facilitates research calls quickly and efficiently whilst maintaining the ambition to fund the highest quality proposals?

2. Acceptability: are processes associated with the Responsive Mechanism acceptable a) to key stakeholders who help inform our decision making on whether/when to launch responsive research calls; and b) to research applicants? Are there ways in which the research call criteria - thematic focuses, length of study, partnerships – can be improved so the research we fund has greatest potential to influence humanitarian response?

3. Delivery: What are the barriers that cause delays once research teams have been informed that they have been successful? This will entail examining administrative or other delays that prevent research teams from conducting their studies as soon as funding has been approved, thus delaying the overall objective of conducting *rapid* research. Are there common factors which explain why some studies are unable to fully deliver on their expected outputs? Are there ways in which Elrha can mitigate the likelihood of post-contract delays and the possibility of studies not being completed in line with expectations?

<u>METHODOLOGY</u>

We anticipate that the review will consist of a range of methods:
*   An investigation of whether responsive research mechanisms similar to the R2HC mechanism exist, to be identified through knowledge of/contacts with research funders, and a review of related documents describing the purpose and processes of such mechanisms.

---

[2] 2017 Food & Nutrition Call (3 proposals funded); 2019 DRC Ebola Call (5 proposals funded); 2020 Covid-19 Call (15 proposals funded).

elrha

Partnership . Research . Innovation .

- A review of the R2HC responsive mechanism, including relevant documents, records related to time processes associated with grants awarded through responsive calls, and grantee final reports (where available). (Access will be provided to relevant records).

- Key informant interviews with:
  - ➢ Administrators of non-R2HC responsive research mechanisms (if identified) to obtain an understanding of comparative procedures and processes
  - ➢ Selected R2HC staff, and Elrha staff from the Finance, Grants & Contracts team responsible for contracting, to understand related procedures, processes and perceptions
  - ➢ Selected R2HC key stakeholders (donors, Advisory Group, Funding Committee members etc) who play a role in determining whether to launch a responsive research call, and are involved in some of the subsequent processes
  - ➢ Selected researchers awarded grants through the R2HC responsive mechanism, and key individuals within their institutions, to explore perceptions related to their experience of applying for, securing and implementing grants awarded through the R2HC responsive research mechanism; as well as barriers and enablers related to conducting research within tight time-frames in humanitarian health settings or during epidemic outbreaks.

DELIVERABLES REQUIRED

1. Expanding on the proposal, an **inception report** will describe the detailed research methodology and workplan**.**

2. **Evaluation report** clearly describing the key findings and recommendations.

3. A **power point presentation** of key findings and recommendations.

4. **Data sets** resulting from the evaluation (list of interviewees, anonymised summary notes from interviews etc.).

TIMELINE

It is anticipated that the review will take 50 days over a period of 5 months. The intended start date is 30 November 2020 and the period of implementation of the contract will be 5 months from this date, ending on 30 April 2021.

In addition to key deadlines in the table below, the selected provider will be expected to have **monthly calls** with Simon Pickard, R2HC Portfolio Manager, to report on progress.

elrha

Partnership . Research . Innovation .

Activity	Date of completion (indicative/ subject to change)	Detail
1. **Application deadline**	31 October 2020	
2. **Selection and contracting**	4 – 1 December 2020	
3. **Introductory call with Elrha**	Late November (date tbc)	Introduction by Elrha to scope of work. Opportunity for discussion.
4. **Delivery and presentation of Inception Report**	Mid December 2020 (date tbc)	Call to have detailed discussion on Inception Report, scope, methodology and approach.
5. **Draft Report**	End February 2021 (date tbc)	Draft report will be submitted for review.
6. **Feedback/comments from Elrha**	10 days after draft report is received	Elrha will provide one set of comments. A teleconference will be held to discuss the feedback.
7. **Final Report**	30 April March 2021	All deliverables will be submitted on or by this date.

REPORTING LINES

The consultant/evaluation team will nominate a **single point of contact** to oversee and coordinate the work and ensure effective communication with Elrha. Roles and responsibilities of different team members (where applicable) must be clearly defined.

The evaluation will be overseen by Anne Harmer, Head of R2HC. The evaluation focal point on a day to day basis will be Simon Pickard, R2HC Portfolio Manager.

Elrha will introduce and initiate contact between the provider and external stakeholders e.g. donors, the Advisory Group, Funding Committee, grantees.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Applicants may be individuals or teams which meet the required experience and qualifications. The following essential experience should be **demonstrated in applications** as a written statement:

- Experience of conducting process evaluations
- Experience of evaluating grant-making institutions that fund public health research
- Knowledge of the humanitarian sector, and understanding of the need for rapid research
- Ability to produce high quality written reports

elrha

Partnership . Research . Innovation .

AVAILABLE BUDGET AND EXPECTED STRUCTURE OF FINANCIAL OFFER

A budget of **up to £20,000 is available, excluding applicable UK VAT but including any taxes that overseas suppliers may be liable for outside the UK.**

Please indicate if you/your company is VAT registered and where.

The budget submitted to us should be broken down by activity and with any allocations for individual team members shown clearly. This should include any travel costs and other expenses.

Please note that payment is in arrears and linked to satisfactory completion of specific tasks (e.g. the delivery of reports) by the deadlines specified in Section 4 above (Timeline).

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should include:

- **Proposed approach, methodology and workplan** to achieve the required deliverables within the timeline (can be indicative). This should clearly include how the key objectives of the work will be addressed[3].
- **Description of the consultant/team** to demonstrate qualifications, experience and suitability to undertake the evaluation, with examples of similar work undertaken previously (this can include CVs and examples of reports of similar work undertaken)
- **Proposed budget** broken down by activity and including allocations for individual team members if applicable.

Proposals should be in English and will need to demonstrate a **concise and clear communication style**.

You may wish to include (attached as links or appendices):

- Examples of relevant work and materials produced.
- References or testimonies from previous partners or clients.

We are looking for proposals to demonstrate a concise and clear communication style. Proposals can be submitted as Word documents or PDFs.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

The application deadline is 23:59 GMT 31 October 2020. We will not be able to consider incomplete applications or applications submitted after the deadline.

Applications must include the following:
- CV(s) and evidence of expertise in conducting evaluations.
- Covering letter setting out interest in and suitability for this consultancy role against the role requirements.
- Examples of evaluations or other relevant reports conducted, preferably in the humanitarian sector.
- Proposed approach and daily rate.

---

[3] See Objectives, Page 2

elrha

Partnership. Research. Innovation.

Please submit applications to r2hc@elrha.org for the attention of Simon Pickard.

PROVIDER SELECTION

Applications will be appraised on a number of criteria, including:

- Relevant experience of consultant/team
- Proposed evaluation methodology
- Familiarity with grant making institutions or similar
- Understanding of humanitarian context
- Feasibility and value for money.

DUE DILIGENCE CHECKS AND CONTRACTING

We must ensure any potential supplier is evaluated for compliance to relevant statutory and quality requirements, and that appropriate due diligence checks are carried out, proportionate to the nature and value of the contract.

Due Diligence is our process of reviewing your organisation's finances, governance structure and business activities (including vetting key team members and/or board members, as applicable). We carry out this process on all our suppliers before we can enter into an agreement.

We run our Contracting process in parallel to our Due Diligence. We have a standard agreement which all providers are expected to sign up to. You can request a copy to contracts@elrha.org. If you have any questions about this, please include them in your submission.

Thank you.

elrha

Partnership . Research . Innovation.