

# Request for Proposals

MID-TERM PROGRAM REVIEW: “**CA**talyzing **St**rengthened **po**licy **a**Ction for **he**Althy **Di**ets and **re**silience (**CASCADE**)”, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACTIVITY NUMBER 4000005723

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

### About CASCADE

#### Program Goal and Objectives

CASCADE is a EUR 60m program implemented by CARE and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) between 2022-2026. It is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

The program goal is to contribute to improved food security and the reduction of malnutrition of at least 5 million women of reproductive age (WRA) and children (<15) in Benin, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.<sup>1</sup> The program has two strategic objectives:

- **Strategic Objective 1: Increased access to and consumption of healthy diets** among household members in the six program countries, particularly women of reproductive age and children. (Indicator: number of people with a more diverse and adequate diet).
- **Strategic Objective 2: Increased resilience of the nutritional situation of household members and particularly women of reproductive age and children** to price and climate change-related shocks and stresses in the six program countries. (Indicator: number of people whose nutritional situation became more resilient to shocks).

#### Intermediate Outcomes CASCADE

The overarching Theory of Change (ToC)<sup>2</sup> encompasses five intermediate outcomes that are linked to the main groups of actors comprising food systems: 1) government bodies, 2) private service providers (PSPs), 3) community structures (e.g. community members, advocates, and government service providers), 4) women of reproductive age and children, and 5) the synergies between these actors.

While changes need to take place within all groups of actors to achieve our strategic objectives and ultimate goal, the interaction among them is key.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on CASCADE see this link: [CASCADE: Improving food security for women and children - CARE](#)

<sup>2</sup> Each country has adapted the ToC to their local context and needs, while maintaining the 5 intermediate outcomes.

**Table 1.** CASCADE Intermediate Outcomes

D1	Government bodies' nutrition-related policy actions are better coordinated and more effectively implemented.
D2	Private service providers enhance the effective implementation of nutrition-related policy actions.
D3	Community structures are drivers of change that positively support improved implementation of nutrition-related policies and practices.
D4	Empowered women have increased knowledge, skills and resources to produce, acquire, prepare and consume healthy diets.
D5	Strengthened coordination and linkages among food system actors and processes.

## SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

### Overall objective of mid-term program review

The overall objective of the mid-term program review (MTR) is to assess the program governance and implementation during the first half of the grant period, specifically June 2022 to December 2024, against 5 of the 6 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.<sup>3</sup> **The assessment is intended to be formative, assessing the extent to which the program is on track to accomplish what we set out to accomplish, and identify where adjustments may be required, including options to accelerate progress and improve potential for impact.** As such it will provide insights into the fit of the six country projects as designed within the context of each country's policy environment and context and within the Dutch MFA food and nutrition security policy. It will provide insights and inputs into what areas could be strengthened in future work by the MFA and other donors interested in the same goal and objectives. The methodology will include a desk review of existing project documents and targeted (virtual and/or face-to-face)<sup>4</sup> primary data collection.

### Objectives:

1. Assess the extent to which the program is on track to accomplish what we set out to accomplish, and identify where adjustments may be required;
2. Surface options to accelerate progress and improve potential for impact, including guidance for improved or adjusted program design, implementation, measurement and over-arching governance; and
3. Provide insights into alignment with donor and partner priorities and contextual needs.

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<sup>3</sup> The donor and consortium partners agree that we will not focus on the criterion of 'impact' at this stage in the implementation as it is covered rigorously in the impact evaluation.

<sup>4</sup> This should be specified in the narrative and financial proposal.

## Scope and approach for the MTR

The methodology will include a **desk review** of existing project documents. The proposal, inception reports, and formative study results will provide important background. Focused review of the ToC for each country, workplans, results framework, annual reports, monitoring reports, and baseline evaluation results will allow for assessment of progress against plans. An understanding of the management structures, implementation approaches and partnerships, and monitoring systems will allow for assessment of the efficient use of project human and institutional resources for project delivery. Upon completion of the desk review results, **primary data collection** will provide additional insights from key project stakeholders.

The analysis will explore 5 of 6 OECD criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. That said, several criteria will be assessed as interim results (to be reassessed in-depth at endline), and others as final results (primary conclusions at midline and reassessment only in terms of any programmatic adaptations at endline, Table 2).

Data collection approaches and scale will vary by country, depending on the team makeup and project delivery approaches. However, a sample of project stakeholders from among government, private sector, and implementation (NGO) partners will be included in data collection. Categories of stakeholders to be interviewed include:

- Key project staff, including but not limited to CASCADE Program officers and global support staff;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) staff; National and regional government officials and policy makers; and
- Private sector and local implementation partners.

The *estimated* number of interviews required for the exercise will be approximately 90 in-country stakeholders (15 per country including CASCADE Country Project Officers, partners, and government) and 15 CASCADE Global staff.

CASCADE policy-related activities take place at national, regional, and local levels, while direct implementation takes place at community level. Because this is not human-subjects research, direct beneficiaries will not be interviewed. While some regional travel may be required, a preferred approach is to convene a sample of regional and local project stakeholders in a central location for capturing insights on *key research questions* (Table 2), to validate emerging results, discuss recommendations, and achieve alignment on a way forward. This could be designed as group interviews, KIIs, and/or a structured workshop focused on collecting insights from project stakeholders. CASCADE Staff interviews can largely be held virtually. The methodology presented should outline a proposed approach and rationale for data collection approaches, sampling, and analysis.

**Table 2.** Focus of Analysis

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Midterm focus</b>	<b>Key research questions</b> <i>(Note: the specific research questions are modified from OECD criteria to adapt to the portfolio, as per OECD guidance)</i>
Relevance	Final	To what extent is the project design (Theory of Change and programmatic approaches) appropriate for the needs of key target groups to achieve the stated goals?
Coherence	Final	To what extent does the approach align with the objectives of other major donor investments, national government initiatives, and relevant NGO projects in country or in the sector?  Are there opportunities to reinforce synergies with other MFA supported food and nutrition security programs?  What partners, projects, services are providing nutrition-relevant support in the target geographies and to what extent is CASCADE adding value? Are there any partners or projects that CASCADE is, or can, collaborating with to support wider or deeper effectiveness?
Effectiveness	Interim	Has the approach achieved/is it in the process of/or expected to achieve its stated objectives along the causal pathway, including any planned differential results across the various countries and programmatic areas?  To the extent feasible, provide an interim overview of the potential results the program has or might achieve (e.g. number of people reached) and the depth of that reach.  Based on the current planned activities and implementation efficiency, is the portfolio expected to achieve its reach goals by the end of the grant period?
Efficiency	Interim	To what extent are the project’s management, implementation, and monitoring processes and procedures supporting efficient delivery of the project activities?  To what extent is the current MEAL system (monitoring tools and procedures and evaluation approach) sufficient for reaching targeted outcomes?
Sustainability	Interim	Are benefits observed likely to last, to extend beyond the direct period of investment?  To what extent is CASCADE’s work being anchored into permanent structures and institutions (e.g. sub-national government activities and procedures, shifts in gender norms and expectations, etc.)?  Are other partners (private sector, NGO, etc.) and/or donors engaging in complementary activities with the potential to sustain benefits after the period of investment?

## REQUIRED ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

Required activities will include:

1. Inception report: In partnership with the project focal point in each country, identify the structure of partnerships in each country and the list of respondents. Additionally, provide draft data collection tools, analytical plan, and timeline.
2. Desk review and virtual data collection: For each country and the project overall, conduct a review of the ToC, implementation status, formative research reports, monitoring data, and baseline evaluations compared to proposal objectives. Also evaluate the synergies of this programme with other MFA supported food and nutrition security programs. Virtual data collection can also be completed in parallel.
3. In-country data collection and stakeholder convenings: Following the plans as described in the inception report with comments from the consortium, for each country, and the project overall, conduct interviews, hold stakeholder convenings, perform analysis, and synthesize findings.
4. ‘Sense making’ workshops: Conduct virtual ‘sense-making’ workshops for each country and the project overall that includes a presentation of results from desk review and primary data collection, as well as a discussion of these results, so that consortium partners and MFA representatives can provide input to findings and recommendations.
5. Final report finalization: Incorporate comments from ‘sense-making’ workshops, a report that includes all work completed (desk review, interviews, data analysis, and synthesis of findings, discussion, and recommendations). Conduct close-out meeting. Additional documents submitted include summary slides and all data collected.

**Table 3.** Indicative Timeline for Deliverables

<b>Deliverable Name</b>	<b>Indicative Due/Completion Date</b>
Inception report	17 March 2025
Desk review and virtual data collection	7 April 2025
In-country data collection and stakeholder convenings	30 April 2025
Final report draft	9 June 2025
‘Sense making’ workshops	27 June 2025
Final report finalization and close-out meeting	28 July 2025

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING

This section addresses the process for responding to this solicitation. Applicants are encouraged to review this prior to completing their responses.

### 1. Contact

Please direct any inquiries and communications to the contact below. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

[rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org)

### 2. Budget

Applicants are required to provide a detailed financial proposal, in a sealed file, separate from the technical proposal. The final budget amount will have to be approved prior to starting the project. The type of interviews conducted (virtual or in-person) should be specified in the budget but must include in-person interviews.

There is no required budget template, however the budget submitted should include (i) clear breakdown of all costs (including number of days and daily rate for each person), (ii) justification of overall value for money, (iii) a comprehensive budget justification should be presented for each category of costs. All prices/rates quoted must be inclusive of all taxes/VAT as required.

### 3. Format for proposal

The technical proposal should meet the following guidelines:

- A narrative that does not exceed 5 pages of single-spaced text, inclusive of references, tables, and figures. It should detail the proposed process, timeline, and methodology for answering the key research questions detailed in the Scope of Work. Justification for the suitability of the approach and strategy for delivering within the timeline (and associated risks) should also be detailed. Finally, a strategy for engaging / convening project teams and stakeholders and for dissemination of recommendations.
- Detailed profiles (qualification, expertise, relevant experience etc.) of the agencies and individuals who will be completing the work should be presented (not counted in the 5 page maximum), including their full names, their expertise and publications in relevant research, and capacity to manage the work administratively.

### 4. Submission

One signed copy of the Proposal, along with all the required information including the fee proposal should be sent to the email address mentioned below, subject line “CASCADE Mid-term Review”.

[rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org)

### 5. Deadline

- RFP will be launched by 23 January 2025.
- Questions on the RFP will be accepted until 5 February 2025.
- Question responses will be posted on website on 7 February 2025.

- Completed proposals should be emailed by **5:00 pm CET on 14 February 2025**.
- Shortlisted candidates may be requested to virtually present their proposal before final decision.
- Successful candidate notified after these presentations.

## 6. Unacceptable

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

- Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

## 7. Revisions

Proposals may be revised and resubmitted before the deadline.

## 8. Acceptance

We will not necessarily accept the lowest cost or any of the proposals submitted. Accordingly, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria and mandatory requirements shall govern.

## 9. Completion

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed by a principal or authorising signatory of the lead firm or organisation.
- In case of errors in calculating overall costs, the unit costs will govern.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to understand the requirements and instructions specified. In the event that clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to email specific questions to [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) prior to making their submission.
- While we used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this RFP, the information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline. The information is not warranted to be accurate. Nothing in this RFP is intended to relieve applicants from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this RFP.
- By responding to this RFP, the applicant confirms its understanding that failing to comply with any of the RFP conditions may result in the disqualification of their submission.

## 10. Rights of rejection

We reserve the right to reject any or all submissions or to cancel or withdraw this RFP for any reason and at its sole discretion without incurring any cost or liability for costs or damages incurred by any applicant, including, without limitation, any expenses incurred in the preparation of the submission. The applicant acknowledges and agrees that CASCADE will not indemnify the applicant for any costs, expenses, payments or damages directly or indirectly linked to the preparation of the submission.

## 11. References

We reserve the right, before awarding the proposal, to require the applicant to submit such evidence of qualifications as it may deem necessary, and will consider evidence concerning the financial, technical and other qualifications and abilities of the applicant.

## 12. Release of information

After awarding the proposal and upon written request, only the following information will be released:

- Name of the successful applicant.
- The applicant's own individual ranking.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION

### 13. Notice of non-binding solicitation

CASCADE reserves the right to reject any and all bids received in response to this solicitation and is in no way bound to accept any proposal. CASCADE additionally reserves the right to negotiate the substance of the successful applicants' proposals, as well as the option of accepting partial components of a proposal if deemed appropriate.

### 14. Confidentiality

All information provided as part of this solicitation is considered confidential. In the event that any information is inappropriately released, we will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. Proposals, discussions, and all information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential.

### 15. Right to final negotiations on the proposal

CASCADE reserves the right to negotiate on the final costs, and the final scope of work of the proposal. CASCADE reserves the right to limit or include third parties at CASCADE's sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

### 16. Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Team. The following indicate a list of the significant criteria against which proposals will be assessed. This list is not exhaustive or 100% inclusive and is provided to enhance the applicants' ability to respond with substance.

Applicants are required to submit the following information, conforming to the guidelines given in this section:

- Clear understanding of the scope of work
- Demonstrated ability of team to conduct proposed research
- Competency and track record of similar assignments

The full proposal evaluation criteria and weights are presented below. All proposals will be evaluated separately from their budgets.

- Technical quality of proposal 50%
- Providing detailed technical documentation of the proposed strategy and timeline.
- Clear articulation of methodology, research tools, and analytical approach, and how they will meet stated research objectives.

- Clear articulation of rationale for the proposed approach, including trade-offs (e.g., budget vs. sample size) and likely biases captured in the data and mitigation thereof.
- Competencies and roles 30%
- Experience working in relevant topical areas and conducting research outlined in RFP.
- Organisational capacity to manage and deliver on research outlined in RFP.
- Budget 20%: Value for money

**CASCADE reserves the right to contact the individuals and contractor(s) in order to verify the information provided as part of the Proposal.**

#### 17. Review process

The review process will involve a Review Panel with participants selected by CASCADE.

#### 18. Limitations with regard to third parties

CASCADE does not represent, warrant, or act as agent for any third party as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not authorise any third party to bind or commit CASCADE in any way without CASCADE's express written consent.

#### 19. Communication

All communication regarding this solicitation shall be directed to appropriate parties at CASCADE. Contacting third parties involved in the RFP, the review panel, or any other party may be considered a conflict of interest and could result in disqualification of the proposal.

#### 20. Final acceptance

Award of a Proposal does not imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. CASCADE reserves the right to negotiate on the final terms and conditions including the costs and the scope of work when negotiating the final contract to be agreed between CASCADE and the applicant.

#### 21. Validity period

The offer of services will remain valid for a period of 60 days after the Proposal closing date. In the event of award, the successful applicant will be expected to enter into a contract subject to CASCADE's terms and conditions.

#### 22. Intellectual property

Subject to the terms of the contract to be concluded between CASCADE and the applicant, the ownership of the intellectual property related to the scope of work of the contract, including technical information, know-how, processes, copyrights, models, drawings, source code and specifications developed by the applicant in performance of the contract shall vest entirely with CASCADE.

#### 23. Scope of change

Once the contract is signed, no increase in the liability of CASCADE or in the fees to be paid by CASCADE for the services resulting from any change, modification or interpretation of the

documents will be authorised or paid to the applicant unless such change, modification or interpretation has received the express prior written approval of CASCADE.

## OFFER OF SERVICES

1. Offer submitted by:

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2. (Print or type business, corporate name and address)
3. I (We) the undersigned hereby offer to CASCADE, to furnish all necessary expertise, supervision, materials, and other things necessary to complete to the entire satisfaction of the Executive Director or authorised representative, the work as described in the Request for Proposal according to the terms and conditions of CASCADE for the following prices:
  - a. Click or tap here to enter text.
  - b. Click or tap here to enter text.
  - c. Click or tap here to enter text.
  - d. Click or tap here to enter text.
4. I (We) agree that the Offer of Services will remain valid for a period of sixty days (60) calendar days after the date of its receipt by CASCADE.
5. I (We) herewith submit the following:

- (a) A Proposal to undertake the work, in accordance with CASCADE's requirements specified.
- (b) A duly completed offer of services, subject to the terms herein.

**OFFERS WHICH DO NOT CONTAIN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED DOCUMENTATION OR DEVIATE FROM THE PRESCRIBED COSTING FORMAT MAY BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE AND NON-RESPONSIVE.**

Date this day of Click or tap here to enter text. in Click or tap here to enter text..

\_\_\_\_\_ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)

\_\_\_\_\_ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)