

# SMART

Improvement of inter-agency coordination and management of  
emergency nutrition assessment information through SMART

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Independent Final Project Evaluation – Summary Report  
April 2015



## OVERVIEW

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Action Against Hunger Canada has been the global inter-agency SMART project convenor since 2009. In April 2015 an independent external evaluation to assess the performance and achievements of the current SMART project, ***“Improvement of inter-agency coordination and management of emergency nutrition assessment information through SMART”*** was commissioned. The evaluation was used to augment internal monitoring activities by Action Against Hunger and propose suitable recommendations for the SMART project’s future design and strategies for devising similar interventions.<sup>1</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

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The evaluation methodology was developed under the supervision of Action Against Hunger UK Evaluation Learning and Accountability Unit using Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria. Specific tools and methods were devised to execute the assessment of the SMART project, namely an *evaluation matrix*<sup>2</sup> a *structured questionnaire*<sup>3</sup>, *key informant interviews*<sup>4</sup> and a *review of relevant documentation*.

## KEY FINDINGS BASED ON DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE (DAC) CRITERIA

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**Design:** This project was found to contain a simple yet comprehensive intervention model based on a three tier approach namely: 1) Coordination and dissemination of the information; 2) Emergency response through Emergency Survey Support (ESS)<sup>6</sup>, and 3) Technical capacity building. The findings of consultations with relevant nutrition stakeholders and donors confirmed the project’s compliance with global needs in SMART.

**Relevance:** Evidence was found of the relevance of the SMART project in addressing the challenges encountered in standardization and quality of nutrition surveys in all contexts. Additionally, innovative tools developed by SMART were also determined as relevant in addressing nutrition surveys in emergency contexts, namely: 1) Emergency Survey Support (ESS), and 2) a rapid nutrition assessment methodology, Rapid SMART. Both facilitate the rapid collection of reliable data in complex emergencies and areas of limited accessibility in order to inform programming and prompt quick mobilization of funding.

**Coherence** in the project’s design with the SMART Global Strategy is assured by the Action Against Hunger inter-agency Convenor role. This is further augmented by the organization’s proximity to humanitarian nutrition partners (Global Nutrition Cluster, United Nations agencies, International NGOs, Institutional stakeholders) and relevant global health and nutrition actors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters). Nonetheless, coordination with existing emergency assessment protocols currently adopted by humanitarian actors (i.e. SENS, JAM, RRM, MICS) still needs to be strengthened in order to become effective.

**Coverage:** The project’s coverage depends on the learning needs assessment’s results meaning that it is consistent and updated. This could however be improved by using a mapping system, illustrating needs/resources (at global and a regional level) as a tool for planning the medium/long term SMART Initiative strategy. Beneficiaries’ targeting strategies are well understood and accepted by the partners and are effective in matching locally available capacities.

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<sup>1</sup> This project is funded by OFDA (July 2013 to September 2015) and ECHO (September 2013 to December 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation matrix assessed the design, relevance/appropriateness, coherence, coverage, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the project.

<sup>3</sup> The structured questionnaire was administered to 10 stakeholders who were direct beneficiaries of trainings.

<sup>4</sup> Non-beneficiary stakeholder agencies: *UNICEF, SMART Technical Advisory Group (TAG), Independent Consultant*; INGOs: *ACF, Concern Worldwide, International Medical Corps, World Vision*; institutional actors: *Ministry of Health, National Drought Management Authority, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*; other humanitarian actors: *ECHO, FEWSNET, FSNAU, UNHCR, UNICEF, and SSNS*.

<sup>5</sup> The interviewed beneficiaries of the project were selected using purposive sampling in order to guarantee feedback from various sources.

<sup>6</sup> Deployment criteria for ESS (humanitarian crises or high-risk nutrition situations with an absence of reliable data) are outlined in an MoU between Action Against Hunger Canada and the GNC (signed December 2014).

**Efficiency:** Procedures implemented by the project comply with donor regulations, and decision making for procurement approval is clear, accountable and consistently applied. Multiple strategies were devised to enhance the project's value for money, namely complementary sources of funds and cost coverage in part or in full by partners for capacity building events and deployment of the Emergency Survey Support. The flexibility of Action Against Hunger Canada staff, being able to perform different activities according to the field needs and technical tasks, contributes to the containment of costs of permanent staff. Their capacities and knowledge are acknowledged as outstanding by interviewed stakeholders, which nevertheless consider the number of the SMART team members as too small compared to demonstrated needs.

**Effectiveness:** Based on regular reports submitted to the donors, the project's activities for all three tiers have generally been completed, abiding the grant agreements. These achievements were confirmed during the field mission through meetings, interviews and review of relevant documents. Partners consistently expressed appreciation for Action Against Hunger Canada's performance as inter-agency convenor for SMART, including its role in global and regional coordination (with a physical presence in East Africa), organisation of SMART partner meetings, provision of SMART documents and tools<sup>7</sup>, and Emergency Survey Support. Capacity building in SMART has been found to be the most effective action undertaken by the project.

**Sustainability and likelihood of impact:** The project's long-term strategy is consistent and relies on handover to institutional actors (Ministry of Health, National Bureau of Statistics). Where local capacities are not fully developed, the project also supports Nutrition Information Working Groups and International NGOs, including in quality checks for nutrition surveys and technical support. A training cascade mechanism is essential in improving sustainability and impact of trainings. Participation of institutional (national) actors is however still limited even for trainings implemented locally despite efforts for inclusion, thus affecting likelihood of impact. In terms of Emergency Survey Support, Action Against Hunger Canada could facilitate handover of management and implementation to accountable partners (International NGOs, Ministry of Health) with sufficient capacity in SMART. Additionally, nutrition monitoring systems could be strengthened by improving capacity of monitoring in countries in critical latitudes.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The project implemented by Action Against Hunger Canada as SMART project convenor has been assessed as a fundamental action enabling humanitarian assistance response based on a consistent analysis of nutritional status, which accounts as a reliable indicator for the overall health condition of the population. This project gives a major contribution to the dissemination of SMART and continuous updates to the methodology. Notwithstanding these achievements, there is a need for a clearer strategy in determining future fields of application of SMART.

Recommendations below have been drawn from discussions with project stakeholders.

### Short-term recommendations:

- Formalise the role of Master Trainers for SMART capacity building and clarify the commitment of nutrition agencies (INGOs, UN agencies, Ministries of Health) in the process.
- Improve SMART capacity of permanent staff (e.g., national staff from NGOs and institutional actors).

### Medium-term:

- Develop an Emergency Survey Support toolbox that can be adapted for various deployments of technical expertise to support emergency nutrition surveys.
- Explore global links and synergies between SMART and other methodologies for nutrition assessments in emergencies.
- Analyse likely contexts for SMART in Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness.

### Long term:

- Identify new sources of funding and clarify the terms of the long lasting technical collaborations.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.smartmethodology.org](http://www.smartmethodology.org)

- Develop at global level a mapping system of available resources and gaps in SMART.
- Guarantee capacity to respond to emergencies in complex contexts by improving availability of human resources within the SMART Team at Action Against Hunger Canada.
- Reinforce capacity of Nutrition Information Working Groups in survey validation (data review) and increase involvement of institutional actors in SMART.

A full version of the evaluation report can be found at [www.smartmethodology.org](http://www.smartmethodology.org)