**TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

Evaluation of Mines Advisory Group’s project  
*Physical Security and Stockpile Management Support to Strengthen the Ecuadorian National Capacity*

# Introduction

## Overview of the evaluation

The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) is seeking bids from independent experts and external evaluators to undertake an evaluation of the “Physical Security and Stockpile Management Support to Strengthen the Ecuadorian National Capacity project”, funded by the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs/Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) of the United States Department of State as one of their conventional weapons destruction projects[[1]](#footnote-2).

The evaluation is to be undertaken before April 15, 2025, with the final report to be submitted to MAG no later than May 15, 2025.

## The PM/WRA CWD Program

The U.S. Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) program aims to contribute to civilian security across the globe. It helps governments to destroy excess stockpiles of conventional arms, better secure the stockpiles they retain, and clear landmines and other explosive ordnance.

Another aim is to reduce the likelihood of state-held weapons and ammunitions falling into criminal hands, which could have a direct impact on armed violence, home security, and political stability.

The program also aims to protect civilian populations from deadly hazards, such as unplanned explosions, caused by a wrong handling of high order munition.

PM/WRA’s CWD program objective is three-fold:

“*To enhance regional security by destroying and securing SA/LW, including MANPADS, at risk of proliferation to terrorists, insurgents, and other violent non-state actors;*

*To remediate explosive hazards contamination, returning land to safe and productive use; and*

*To promote U.S. foreign policy interests by broadening international support for CWD efforts.*”1

For the implementation of CWD projects throughout the globe, PM/WRA partners with NGOs and other relevant parties.

Implementing partners have a proven track record delivering projects with robust performance standards, enhanced monitoring and evaluation strategies, and comprehensive program planning processes.

# Scope of MAG, as the implementing partner of the CWD project in Ecuador

## The CWD project in Ecuador

The CWD project in Ecuador is implemented under the title: “*Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) Support to Strengthen the Ecuadorian National Capacity*” and is implemented by the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). The funding authority for this project comes from the Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) account which supports a broad range of U.S. national interests by funding critical, security-related programs.

MAG works in close collaboration with the Ecuadorian Defense and Security Forces, in order to build well-trained, resourced, and sustainable PSSM infrastructure in Ecuador.

Sustainably improving the existing Ecuadorian national capacity to manage state-held weapons stockpiles and routinely and safely disposing of excess and obsolete weapons, is key to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons to criminal hands and other unauthorized parties, as this is one of the main armed violence drivers within the country.

The project also devotes efforts to implement safety standards in state-held munition storehouses, that would minimize the likelihood and impact of unplanned explosions, which usually have devastating effects among civilian population and public infrastructure in the surrounding areas.

## Period of the project

June 15, 2020, to June 14, 2025 (60 months). The impact assessment would cover the period June 15, 2020, to December 31, 2024.

## Project funding

The Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) Support to Strengthen the Ecuadorian National Capacity has an overall budget of $7,750,000, spanning a five-year period. All the funding is managed by MAG, as the implementing partner.

However, in order to maximize the impact of the project, every intervention is planned jointly with the key national stakeholders (namely, the Ecuadorian military and police).

## Objectives, outcomes and impacts of the project

Goal: To sustainably improve the existing Ecuadorian national capacity to manage state-held weapons stockpiles, and routinely and safely dispose of excess and obsolete weapons, and also to promote CWD related initiatives, the project pursues the following   
  
Objectives:

1. Support Ecuador’s efforts to strengthen the local capacity to manage stockpiles and destroy obsolete weapons.
2. Strengthen physical security infrastructure and internal management measures to mitigate the risk of illicit pilferage and ensure sufficient accountability and oversight over state-held weapons.
3. Facilitate the destruction of confiscated or excess weapons and obsolete or unserviceable ammunition and ordnance stored in national depots.
4. Acknowledge and highlight the U.S. as the donor of this project.

Additionally, the project is intended to contribute towards the following outcomes and impacts:

**Outcomes:**

1. Existing Ecuadorian capacity is augmented and equipped with the tools and training necessary to ensure long-term self-sufficiency.
2. The risk of an unplanned explosion that may threaten or harm the local civilian populace and military personnel is mitigated.
3. Stockpiles are more secure, thereby eliminating a potential source of weapons for non-state actors and criminal organizations.

**Impacts:**

1. A wider contribution is made to improve local, national, and regional security through reducing the risk of illicit proliferation of weapons.
2. The Ecuadorian military is better equipped to deal with its ordnance disposal and management needs.

# Scope of the Evaluation

## Objective of the evaluation

The overall objective of this evaluation is to assess the impact of the Ecuador CWD project after more than four years of implementation. This will cover the project’s performance in contributing directly to the project’s objectives, outcomes, impacts and goal, but also contributions (direct and indirect) towards supporting the civil security in Ecuador, considering several evaluation tools, such as MAG’s Armed Violence Reduction (AVR) Theory of Change (ToC), developed during the program period of performance.

The evaluation would broadly answer the following three core questions:

1. To what extent has the project contributed to the sustainable enhancement of Ecuadorian national capacity in managing state-held weapons stockpiles since the project's start?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness and sustainability of project activities in improving Ecuador's capacity to manage state-held weapons stockpiles?
3. In what ways has the project impacted civil security, including armed violence reduction?

## Research Questions and Evaluation criteria

Following the evaluation criteria of the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the current impact assessment aims to cover the following evaluation questions: five of the six evaluation criteria and should aim to cover the following research questions.

| **Criteria** | **Evaluation questions** |
| --- | --- |
| **Relevance**  *Is the intervention doing the right things?* | * To what extent did prioritization of capacity development measures and infrastructure development respond to the needs and priorities of local partners? * To what extent are local partners satisfied with the interventions? * To what extent were projects adapted in response to the conditions in which they were delivered? |
| **Coherence**  *How well does the intervention fit?* | * To what extent were MAG interventions coordinated with, or complementary to, those of other stakeholders within the weapons and ammunition management sector and in other sectors (e.g., humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, environment)? * To what extent did the project undertaken by MAG contribute to the capacity development of national and local security services to mitigate the risk of illicit pilferage, unplanned explosions, and ensure sufficient accountability and oversight over state-held weapons? |
| **Effectiveness**  *Is the intervention achieving its objectives?* | * To what extent has the project contributed to the enhancement of Ecuadorian national capacity in managing state-held weapons stockpiles since the project's start? * To what extent did the program achieve (or not achieve) outcomes and outputs – in line with MAG’s AVR Theory of Change. * What evidence is there that the program, as a whole, contributed to: Civil security, including armed violence reduction? Sustainable nationally owned capacity to reduce armed violence, including that national security sector actors (NSSAs) contribute to reduce armed violence? |
| **Impact**  *What difference does the intervention make?* | * Has the project improved the Ecuadorian national capacity in managing state-held weapons stockpiles since the project's start? * Does the project contribute to enhanced civil security in Ecuador? * Did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems), was it transformative? * Has the intervention led to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results? |
| **Sustainability**  *Will the benefits last?* | * To what extent are the objectives achieved likely to continue after the program ends? * How has the project ensured that partners are able to maintain strengthened local capacity after the project ends? * How do stakeholders perceive the sustainability of project activities in improving Ecuador's capacity to manage state-held weapons stockpiles? |

The research questions will be refined jointly by the evaluation team once selected, MAG and key stakeholders including PM/WRA and Ecuadorian partners. Furthermore, further considerations regarding gathering learned lessons from the implementation of this project are expected.

# Methodology

It is expected that the evaluator/evaluation team **proposes and presents a methodology** for the evaluation as part of this tender, to be finalized with MAG during inception. The proposed methodology should be designed to effectively respond to the questions raised above, and should consider the following:

* The initial part of the assessment report will, where possible, collect available information to conduct a contextual analysis and desk review, which aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Ecuadorian national capacity to manage state-held weapons and munitions, prior to the onset of the assessed CWD project. This aims to support the relevance of implementing CWD related initiatives in the country.
* A mixed-method approach will be used to answer the research questions using solid technical criteria, including key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The different research questions that are expected to answer the evaluation objective, are guided by the evaluation criteria of the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
* Understanding context from a conflict-sensitive perspective, and its impact on the environment where the project has taken place.
* Besides answering the proposed research questions, the report will also assess additional needs that could be addressed in the future, in order to enhance the Ecuadorian capacity to manage state-held weapons and munition stockpiles and routinely and safely dispose of excess and obsolete weapons.
* The report will gather information from relevant stakeholders in Ecuador (e.g. national authorities, military and police personnel, implementing partners, etc.) and in the US (PM/WRA program managers, desk officers, embassy, and other key US Government interlocuters), to assess lessons that have been learned through the implementation of the CWD project, in order to improve the quality of future interventions.
* MAG will arrange a workshop at the end of the assessment period in Ecuador, to review the outcomes among relevant staff within the organization. While MAG will cover the logistical costs of organizing the workshop, the evaluator/evaluation team should include necessary time and travel cost etc. to participate in the workshop and present their findings and recommendations.
* Limitations need to be acknowledged as there is no established research framework on impact evaluations for weapons and ammunition projects within the armed violence reduction sector. MAG proposes to utilize an organizational Theory of Change (ToC) on Armed Violence Reduction (AVR) as part of this impact assessment, however alternative evaluation frameworks will be considered.
* Obtaining data in this field of work can be sensitive by nature and available data may be limited by certain stakeholders due to reasons of national security.

## Initial desk study

Once the contract is signed, the evaluator/evaluation team will be expected to start the desk review to conduct minor adjustments in their proposal. A report including the final plan for the evaluation (methodology, outlined tools including online sessions, timeline, etc.) will be expected about 20 days after the signature of the contract.

During this period, the proposed evaluation instruments and the final version of the evaluation framework should be submitted for the approval of MAG.

It should be noted that any adjustment is not subject to increases in the total price of the consultancy fee.

## Review of secondary data and sources

Given the nature of the project and the sensitivity of the sector, it should be acknowledged that the availability of secondary data might be limited in some areas.

Nevertheless, MAG is expecting that the evaluator/evaluation team will take an outcome-focused approach to identify insights that support the impact assessment of the current project. This will be based largely on a **thorough desk review** (but also on the below presented primary data collection methods).

* MAG´s Armed Violence Reduction Theory of Change and its indicators
* Original project proposal and cost extension proposals (in English)
* Monthly reports (in English)
* Quarterly Reports from 2020-2024 (in English)
* Technical assessment reports
* Relevant information that has been gathered throughout 2020-2024 (the consulting team is encouraged to search for additional secondary information, besides the one that has been provided – in English and Spanish)

## Primary data collection

MAG encourages applications that **propose primary data methodologies focused on gathering outcome data**. Activities are expected to include, but are not limited to:

* Data gathering through methods that may include, but are not limited to, stakeholder´s surveys, round table discussions or focus group discussions, case studies, semi-structured interviews and key informant interviews (KIIs);
* Primary data collection from staff teams, project participants, partners and key stakeholders;
* Remote data collection from staff teams and key stakeholders that implement similar initiatives in other countries;
* Review and discussion of initial findings with MAG’s evaluation steering group.

## Timeframe

The evaluation is expected to be initiated in October 2024 and completed no later than May 15, 2024, including the submission of the final report, and the participation of the consulting group in the findings workshop with MAG’s steering group. A tentative timetable of the impact assessment is presented in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity/Month** | **Nov 24** | **Dec 24** | **Jan 25** | **Feb 25** | **Mar 25** | **Apr 25** | **May 25** |
| Initial desk study |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of evaluation instruments |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Submission of evaluation framework |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Pilot of evaluation instruments report |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data gathering |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data cleaning and analysis |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Presentation of preliminary findings |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Report writing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Presentation of findings (workshop in  Ecuador, other formats TBC) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Report review |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Layout/design of report |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Official handout of report |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Evaluation deliverables

**Inception report/Evaluation framework**

An inception report shall be presented no later than 20 days after the contract’s signature. This report will present the final version of the assessment´s framework, instruments, and timetable.

**Report of the evaluation instruments**

After piloting the evaluation instruments, a short report shall be presented, to agree on the fully application of those. The report should be presented no later than 60 days after the contract’s signature

**Presentation of preliminary findings**

By the end of the fifth month of the assessment, the consulting team should present the preliminary findings to MAG’s steering group.

The steering group will include experts which can discuss the findings with the consulting team, and request some adjustments if considered necessary. The preliminary findings will be presented in a workshop to take place in Quito and possibly one in the US.

**Evaluation report**

A final evaluation report will be delivered as the product of this final evaluation and endline exercises. The report is expected to broadly follow this structure:

* Executive summary
* Introduction (background and context)
* Methodology (tools used, sample, limitations
* Findings (per criteria – including quotes, graphs, and tables)
* Recommendations
* Conclusions
* Annexes

It should be noticed that all the deliverables should be written in American English, and the final report also in Spanish.

## Stakeholders

The evaluation will involve **interviews, either face to face or remotely, with a variety of stakeholders** in some countries of operation. These may include, but are not limited to:

* Project participants (military and police staff)
* Representatives from relevant national authorities
* International programme staff
* National programme staff
* Management and support staff (UK and remote)
* United States Government Representatives (both US Embassy and Department of State staff)

## Intended use of the evaluation

MAG will use the findings of the evaluation to **inform and guide future planning and implementation** of similar projects/programming.

For PM/WRA, the evaluation will provide an **external report** on the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the use of their funding.

# Management

## Budget

**A total of USD 55,000 is available for this evaluation**. The evaluator/evaluation team are expected to propose a budget as part of their tender, to be finalised with the successful applicant before contracting.

MAG plan on making two payments linked to the main milestones:

* First payment equal to 20% for delivery of the inception report/evaluation framework.
* Payment of 60% against key milestones (TBD)
* A final payment equal to 20% upon delivery of the full and satisfactory findings/report.

The final report will be the property of MAG and PM/WRA and must not be circulated to other parties by the author or any other parties without prior consent by all actors.

## Coordination

**The evaluator/evaluation team will be expected to report regularly to the MAG evaluation steering group** on the progress of the evaluation and any issues arising. They will be available to respond to questions and provide any appropriate practical support.

A timetable for reporting will be finalized following selection of the evaluator/evaluation team, the establishing of the work plan and the signing of a contract.

**While visiting programs, the evaluator/evaluation team will be under the responsibility of the MAG country program team**, which will ensure that visits to relevant sites are facilitated and supported, and that any necessary in-country information is made available for analysis.

The MAG program team will also hold overall responsibility to assist the evaluator(s) in their work, for instance by setting up appropriate meetings with external stakeholders, where possible and if requested by the evaluator.

**Research management/responsibilities**

* **Full time research consultant or team** (to be recruited) to conduct the evaluation.
* **MAG lead: Head of Programme Performance & Learning (PPL)** to oversee the project and support the research consultant, field visit during research and PPL Coordinator
* **MAG support in countries:** to supportfield visit during research including for accommodations, transportation, facilitating meetings and workshops as required
* **Enumerators** to collect impact assessment data
* **HQ Comms team** to support with report presentation and design.

## Safeguarding

MAG has a Safeguarding Framework that includes a staff Policy on Personal Conduct and a Child Protection Policy which have been developed to ensure the maximum protection of program participants and to clarify the responsibilities of MAG staff, visitors to programs and partner organisations, and the standards of behavior expected of them.

MAG has the responsibility to ensure that any persons hired, used or consulted during the process are made familiar with our safeguarding policies and commit to abide by them during execution of this work.

**Any consultants who are offered a contract with MAG will be expected to sign our Policy on Personal Conduct** as an appendix to their contract. By doing so, consultants acknowledge that they have understood the contents of policies and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the provisions of this document.

# Tender management

## Assessment of proposals

MAG invites submissions of a technical proposal in response to this ToR. Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Description** |
| **Qualifications (25%)**  Implementation of, at least, 3 impact evaluations of development, humanitarian, security or related projects.  Experience assessing humanitarian security, armed violence reduction, or similar projects is a plus  Experience assessing projects funded by United States Government Agencies is a plus  (The experience has to be documented and proof of the conducted assessments, such as contracts or completion certificates have to be annexed) | * General liability/capacity of the company * Previous relevant research projects executed (with focus on the set-up as required, with a consultant coordinating and supervising a team of researchers across several geographies) * Relevant sector experience and experience working with NGOs |
| **Proposed services (50%)**  (Documented with the technical proposal) | * Content of the proposal suitable for the requirements * Proposed methodology for the qualitative and/or quantitative research * Detailed budget * Value for money of the proposal * Workplan |
| **Personnel qualifications (25%)**  (Documented with CVs of relevant staff involved in the project) | * Experience of core people who will work on the project with similar projects and NGO experience |
| Interview to assess qualifications, proposed services, and personal qualifications | * Only the top 3 candidates will be invited to the interview. * To cover the above topics * Interviewees may be asked to prepare a short presentation outlining their planned approach in response to this ToR |

## Profile of the Evaluator/Evaluation team

Experts expressing an interest in doing this work should be able to demonstrate experience in the following areas:

**Essential**

* Experience of successfully undertaking similar evaluations for international NGOs
* Experience of assessing outcomes
* Research skills and knowledge of good practice in evaluation
* Interpersonal skills that evoke trust and are gender and culturally sensitive
* Strong verbal and written English language skills
* Strong verbal and written Spanish language skills
* Knowledge of the humanitarian security sector and how it links with humanitarian action and socio-economic development

**Desirable**

* Experience of carrying out evaluations of multi-year projects
* Experience of using different methodologies to assess outcomes
* Experience managing U.S. government grants and contracts, and knowledge of applicable laws and regulations

We welcome applications involving evaluators with knowledge/experience of Ecuador/the wider Latin America region.

## Application Submission

Please refer to the document “Application Instructions” for details about how to submit an application for the current impact assessment opportunity.

1. <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-weapons-removal-and-abatement/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)