Terms of Reference and Call for Applications

Evaluation: MSF Sweden Specialised Operational Support (SOS)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 20 December 2026

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international humanitarian medical organisation that provides medical care to people in crisis around the world, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs. MSF's core principles are neutrality, impartiality, independence, medical ethics, bearing witness, and accountability. More information on MSF can be found **here.**

The Vienna Evaluation Unit (VEU), based at MSF Austria, is one of two MSF units responsible for managing and guiding evaluations of MSF projects and programmes worldwide. More information on MSF evaluations and the VEU is available **here**.

Evaluation Topic	Evaluation of MSF Sweden's Specialised Operational Support (SOS), encompassing the three entities hosted and funded by MSF Sweden: the Stockholm Evaluation Unit (SEU), the Sweden Innovation Unit (SIU) and MSF Paediatric Days. The three entities are evaluated in sequence under one common framework, followed by a final synthesis.
Purpose of the Evaluation	Primarily accountability: to provide MSF Sweden's General Director, Senior Management Team (SMT) and Board with a well-evidenced assessment of the extent to which each entity meets the criteria set in the MSF Sweden Strategy 2026–2030, to inform MSF Sweden's decisions on its future support to the three entities. Secondarily, learning for each entity, and on applying these criteria for the first time for MSF Sweden and movement wide, including practical guidance for assessing operational support in future.
Intended Use	• Evaluation recommendations to the General Director and SMT, who formulate their own recommendations to the MSF Sweden Board • Informing any decisions on the SOS entities for the next strategic cycle • Reflection by the entities themselves, feeding into their strategic reviews and annual planning • Lessons on applying the criteria, and practical guidance for future assessment of operational support for MSF Sweden and, where relevant, the wider movement
Commissioner(s)	General Director of MSF Sweden, on behalf of the Senior Management Team

Commissioned to	Vienna Evaluation Unit (VEU)
Period Evaluated	From approximately January 2024 (i.e. two years before the current strategic period) to the start of each entity's evaluation module.
Duration of Evaluation	From February 2027 to May 2028, part time: an inception phase common to the three entities, three phased modules (partly overlapping) and a synthesis.
Planned Start Date	February 2027
Application Documents Required:	• CV(s) • Cover letter highlighting the applicant(s)' relevant expertise and experience for this assignment (max. 1 page) • Initial proposal of an evaluation matrix and approach (max. 2 pages), showing how the applicant would apply the criteria across three very different entities, and an indicative workplan for the three modules and the synthesis • Writing sample of a completed or co-authored evaluation (if co-authored, specify your exact contribution) • Total fees (total budget allocated for this evaluation is **EUR 60,000**) Applications must be sent to: veuapplication@vienna.msf.org by **20 December 2026 at 23:59 (CET)**. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted by the end of the first week of January 2027 at the latest and invited to an online interview during the week of 18 or 25 January 2027.

1. CONTEXT

MSF Sweden is one of the Sections of the MSF movement. Besides its role in fundraising, communication, advocacy and human resources for operations, MSF Sweden hosts and funds three entities that provide what it calls Specialised Operational Support (SOS):

- **Stockholm Evaluation Unit (SEU):** one of MSF's evaluation units. It manages evaluations and supports learning for MSF operations, working mainly with the Operational Centre Brussels (OCB).
- **Sweden Innovation Unit (SIU):** supports MSF's projects across several operational directorates on inclusive innovation, working with local teams and communities. It collaborates with MSF UK under a memorandum of understanding.
- **MSF Paediatric Days:** a project co-sponsored by MSF Sweden and the Operational Centre Barcelona-Athens (OCBA), built around a recurring conference on paediatric care in humanitarian settings and workshops between conferences. The next conference takes place in April 2027.

In its **Strategy 2026–2030**, MSF Sweden committed to evaluating the three entities against four criteria. Operational support should be:

- relevant and purposeful,

- strategic,
- catalytic and
- measurable.

The strategy also states that MSF Sweden should only invest in operational support when there is a clear and unmet need in the movement that existing structures cannot cover, when MSF Sweden is the best place to host it, and when all the criteria are met. As per the Strategy 2026–2030, the criteria apply to the existing entities and to any future proposal for operational support.

The decision to evaluate the SOS entities originated with the MSF Sweden Board during the development of the Strategy 2026–2030. It reflects a broader discussion within the MSF movement on programme support, the role of Sections and the allocation of resources. In this context, the Board identified the need for a stronger evidence base to inform its decisions on which operational support MSF Sweden should host and fund. This evaluation is intended to provide that evidence.

In parallel, the international MedOps platform has proposed applying the same four criteria, with further developed definitions, to new and existing programme support across the movement. This proposal is expected to be discussed by the Full ExCom in November 2026 and may be further refined. The evaluation will therefore use it as a reference where relevant, while remaining anchored in the MSF Sweden Strategy and its criteria.

The three entities differ considerably in size, nature, governance arrangements and partnerships. The SEU and the SIU are office-based units, while Paediatric Days is a project structured around a recurring conference cycle. All three were established before the criteria were defined, and this evaluation constitutes the first application of the criteria to existing operational support.

2. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The primary purpose of the evaluation is accountability, understood here as responsible governance, meaning informed decisions that best match MSF Sweden's resources with operational needs, rather than a test of compliance. It will provide the General Director, the Senior Management Team and the Board of MSF Sweden with a robust, evidence-based assessment of the extent to which each SOS entity meets each of the four criteria of the Strategy 2026–2030. This assessment will inform MSF Sweden's decisions on its future support to the three entities.

The evaluation is deliberately timed at the midpoint of the strategic period, so that its findings can support adjustments while there is still time to make them. It is not intended as a pass-or-fail exercise. Recommendations should be forward-looking and consider a range of options for how each entity can best meet the criteria, for example by strengthening its current model, refocusing its work, developing new links or partnerships, or adapting its scale or set-up.

The evaluation also has a secondary learning purpose, which follows the assessment. Once the criteria have been applied to the three entities, a final synthesis will draw lessons on how MSF Sweden supports operational support more broadly and on the application of the criteria themselves.

Boundaries

- **Scope:** each entity as a whole, against the four criteria. The evaluation does not assess the quality of individual outputs (for example single evaluations, innovation projects or conference sessions), except as evidence for the criteria.
- **Period:** from approximately January 2024 to the start of each module.

- **Location:** the SEU and the SIU are hosted by MSF Sweden in Stockholm, and Paediatric Days is co-sponsored by MSF Sweden and OCBA; their staff and users are spread across MSF operational directorates, Sections and projects. Most data collection is expected to be remote, with one trip to Stockholm towards the end for the presentation and discussion of findings.

Intended use and users

- **Primary users:** the General Director and SMT of MSF Sweden (recommendations) and the MSF Sweden Board (decisions).
- **Secondary users:** the three entities, for their own reflection and planning (e.g. refocusing, new partnerships, adapting scale or set-up); operational directorates and entities using their services; and, for the lessons on applying the criteria, the international MedOps platform.

3. EVALUATION : OBJECTIVES, CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

Objectives

For each of the three entities:

- Assess the extent to which the entity meets each of the criteria of the MSF Sweden Strategy 2026–2030.
- Formulate forward-looking recommendations, considering a range of adaptive options, to inform both the entity's own reflection, strategic reviews and annual planning and MSF Sweden's strategic considerations on its operational support.

Across the three entities (synthesis):

- Draw lessons on how MSF Sweden hosts and funds specialised operational support (SOS).
- Draw lessons from this first application of the criteria and guiding principle: how they work in practice across very different types of support, and what could be improved.

Criteria and evaluation framework

The criteria of the MSF Sweden Strategy are the backbone of the evaluation. The three entities have drafted a scoring rubric (scale of 1 to 5 per criterion). During the inception phase, the evaluator will:

- propose how each criterion applies to each entity, keeping a common core so that the approach is consistent across the three;
- review the draft rubric and propose a rule for reaching an overall judgement, including what it means to meet a criterion, consistent with the strategy's principle that all criteria must be met;
- propose how the strategy's guiding principle for operational support (responding to a need that existing structures cannot cover, and the added value of MSF Sweden as host) can be integrated into the overall judgement process alongside the four criteria.

The proposed MedOps platform definitions of the criteria may be used as a reference, taking into account their status at the time. As the entities predate the criteria, the evaluation will look at what each entity can demonstrate and has in place now, rather than penalising the absence at start-up of elements such as a baseline or predefined review points.

Main evaluation questions

Criterion	Main evaluation questions (common to the three entities)
Relevant and purposeful	1. To what extent does the entity directly support MSF's social mission by responding, in an appropriate and ethical way, to real needs of MSF operations? 2. How does it identify and prioritise these needs? 3. How has demand for its work evolved, and how well has the entity adapted to changing operational contexts and priorities? 4. To what extent does it contribute to the quality of MSF's medical humanitarian operations?
Strategic	5. To what extent is the entity aligned with and contributing to MSF Sweden's ambitions (its mission, mandate and intentions as a Section)? 6. What advantage does hosting the entity bring to MSF Sweden, including diversifying its contribution to the movement, strengthening its values and culture, and its reputation as an efficient partner?
Catalytic	7. To what extent does the entity drive positive, sustainable change by shaping knowledge, attitudes and practices beyond its own outputs? 8. How, and how well, does it promote collaboration, capacity building and learning across the MSF movement, and seek synergies with others? 9. What long-term support does this require?
Measurable	10. To what extent can the entity's results be shown at project and organisational levels, in terms of effectiveness, efficiency (use of resources) and impact? 11. What monitoring, learning and adaptation practices does the entity have in place to track its results and adjust its work?
Guiding principle	12. To what extent does the entity respond to a need in the movement that is not addressed through existing structures, and what is its added value compared with other actors in the movement? 13. To what extent does this make MSF Sweden a relevant host for the entity?

Synthesis questions

1. Taken together, what do the three evaluations tell MSF Sweden about how it hosts and funds specialised operational support, and what does this mean for its future choices?
   - 1.1. What common strengths, challenges and patterns emerge across the three entities, beyond what is specific to each?
   - 1.2. How well do MSF Sweden's current arrangements for hosting, funding and governing operational support function?
   - 1.3. What do these findings suggest for how MSF Sweden assesses and decides on operational support during the rest of the strategic period, including any future proposals?
2. What did applying the criteria for the first time teach us about how well they work in practice to assess very different types of operational support?
   - 2.1. To what extent were the criteria and the guiding principle clear, distinct from one another and applicable to the three entities?
   - 2.2. How workable were the rubric and the judgement process in reaching a fair, evidence-based assessment, and what helped or limited this?
   - 2.3. What, if anything, would need to be clarified, adjusted or added for the criteria to be used consistently in the future, including in the mid-term review of the Strategy 2026–2030?
3. What feedback can be shared with MSF Sweden and, where relevant, the international MedOps platform to inform the further development and use of the criteria?
   - 3.1. What practical lessons on definitions, evidence, judgement and process are most useful for MSF Sweden's own use of the criteria?
   - 3.2. Which of these lessons are relevant beyond MSF Sweden, for the movement-wide discussion on assessing programme support?

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation team will define the appropriate evaluation methodology during the inception phase, in collaboration with the VEU and the evaluation commissioner.

As a preliminary idea, based on the described purpose and objectives, the evaluation design could include:

Overall design

One evaluation in three phases, led by one lead evaluator (or a team under one lead) from start to end:

- **Common inception phase:** one framework for the three entities (operationalisation of the criteria, judgement rule, evaluation matrix with a common core and entity-specific questions, stakeholder mapping, workplan).
- **Three modules, one per entity, in sequence:** SEU first, then SIU, then Paediatric Days (last so that it includes the April 2027 conference and wrap up period), with some overlap. Each module has its own data collection, sense-making (as a continuous loop throughout the module), validation and report.
- **Synthesis:** a reflection across the three modules and on the criteria themselves. It builds mainly on the module findings, complemented by a limited number of additional interviews (for example with the SMT and Board focal points) on MSF Sweden's overall arrangements for hosting, funding and governing operational support.

Data collection (indicative)

- Review of strategies, internal guidelines and tools, Board reporting, monitoring data, budgets and previous evaluations or reviews of each entity
- Key informant interviews with the entities' teams, their users (SEU and SIU) across operational directorates and Sections, governance bodies (steering committees, Board focal points) and partners
- Group discussions (for example with paediatric advisors across operational directorates) and, where useful, short surveys (for example of Paediatric Days participants)
- Cost analysis of the resources used by each entity
- Validation workshops with each entity and its consultation group members

Some informants are relevant to more than one entity. Interviews should be coordinated across the modules to avoid duplication where possible and limit the burden on informants. During the inception phase each entity will share an initial list of stakeholders.

Roles and independence

The Vienna Evaluation Unit (VEU) will manage the evaluation process and quality control (evidence, timeliness, adherence to the terms of reference). All judgements, conclusions and recommendations are those of the evaluation team. As the VEU is itself an evaluation unit and part of the operational support provided within the movement, it does not contribute to the assessment of any of the entities, including where the evaluation considers the SEU in relation to other evaluation capacity in the movement.

5. DELIVERABLES/OUTPUTS

All products developed must be in English. Deliverables for this evaluation include:

Phase	Deliverable	Indicative date
Inception	**Inception report** for the whole evaluation, using the VEU template: framework and judgement rule, evaluation matrix (common core and entity-specific questions), stakeholder mapping, workplan for the three modules and the synthesis	End March 2027
Module 1: SEU	• Short module note (adapted matrix, informants, data collection plan) • Validation workshop • Draft and final module report, with executive summary and one-page summary sheet • Presentation of findings	April to July 2027
Module 2: SIU	• Same as module 1	June to November 2027
Module 3: Paediatric Days	• Same as module 1 (start not before September 2027, after the April 2027 conference)	September 2027 to February 2028
Synthesis	• Synthesis report across the three modules and on the application of the criteria • Summary for the MSF Sweden Board • Final presentation to the General Director and SMT and to the Board	March to May 2028 (hard stop: May 2028) for presentation to the Board in June 2028

The lead evaluator may propose an adjusted distribution of the modules within the overall timeline, as long as the Paediatric Days constraint and the May 2028 hard stop are respected.

Reports follow the VEU report writing guidelines[1].

6. EVALUATION TARGET AUDIENCE

The results will be shared with the General Director, the SMT and the Board of MSF Sweden, and with the three entities. The General Director and the SMT are responsible for formulating recommendations to the Board. As the entities serve operational directorates and Sections across the movement, and the criteria are of wider interest, the evaluation is also expected to be relevant beyond MSF Sweden. Products may therefore be shared, in full or in summary form, with the operational directorates and Sections the entities work with, and the lessons on applying the criteria with the international MedOps platform. The scope and format of this wider dissemination will be decided by the commissioner. Selected stakeholders involved in the evaluation will be kept informed of its progress at key milestones.

Consultation group

A single consultation group will accompany the evaluation. It will review and comment on the terms of reference, the inception report, the preliminary findings (validation) and the draft reports, to build a shared understanding of the process and its findings as the evaluation progresses. Members will be involved in the common phases (inception and synthesis) and/or in the evaluation of the entity or entities

[1] https://evaluation.msf.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/VEU%20Inception%20report%20template%202021.docx
https://evaluation.msf.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/veu_evaluation_report_format_and_guidelines_2023.docx

relevant to them, as set out in the table below. As Board members serve in a voluntary capacity, their involvement will be limited to these defined points.

Member (role)	Overall	SEU	SIU	PD
General Director, MSF Sweden (commissioner)	•	•	•	•
MSF Sweden Board focal points for each entity (strategic platforms)	•	•	•	•
Head of the SEU	•	•		
Head of the SIU	•		•	
Paediatric Days Project Coordinator				•
SEU steering committee, including OCB representatives		•		
Paediatric Days steering committee member for MSF Sweden (medical advisor)	•			•
OCBA representative (Paediatric Days co-sponsor)				•

The VEU evaluation manager's role is limited to process and quality control.

7. BUDGET

The available budget for this evaluation is **EUR 60,000** for all fees, covering the inception phase, the three modules and the synthesis. This amount includes all taxes to be paid by the external consultant(s) for conducting this evaluation. Travel to Stockholm, if needed, is covered separately by MSF (no per diem).

Note: MSF Austria is not part of the EU VAT reverse charge mechanism.

8. PROFILE / REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES

Candidate selection will be based on **relevant experience and expertise for this evaluation mission**.

Candidates may apply **as individuals or consulting teams**.

A single lead evaluator is expected to take responsibility for the whole evaluation and its consistency across the three entities. Within the overall budget, the lead evaluator may bring in additional team members or specific expertise for defined parts of the work, in consultation with the VEU. Applicants who already plan to work as a team should present the proposed team composition and roles in their application.

Qualifications	***Essential:*** advanced degree in evaluation, social sciences, organisational development or a related field
Experience	***Essential:*** • Minimum 10 years of professional experience in evaluation, including leading complex, multi-stakeholder evaluations • Experience evaluating organisational units, support functions, models or strategies (not only field projects) • Good knowledge of MSF or a comparable medical humanitarian organisation: its governance, the roles of operational directorates and Sections, and the related debates • Proven evaluation methodology skills, including mixed methods and evaluative judgement against criteria or rubrics

	Preferred: • Experience in organisational development or change management in the non-profit sector • Understanding of medical programming (a medical or paediatric background is not required), of innovation in humanitarian settings, and of evaluation and learning functions • Familiarity with current MSF movement discussions on operational programme support
Skills	***Essential:*** • Strong analytical and writing skills in English • Ability to facilitate sense-making and validation workshops with senior stakeholders and Board members • Ability to remain neutral on contested topics, with no fixed views on what programme support should be, and to make one's own positioning explicit • Ability to manage a phased assignment over about 16 months, alongside other work ***Preferred:*** • Working knowledge of French or Spanish • Ability to bring in specific expertise (for example innovation or medical education) for defined parts of the work, in consultation with the VEU

Conflict of interest: knowledge of MSF is an asset for this assignment. Applicants are asked to indicate in their cover letter any previous or current work with MSF and in particular with MSF Sweden, the SEU, the SIU, MSF Paediatric Days or the international MedOps platform, so that any potential conflict of interest can be addressed transparently from the outset. Where relevant, applicants should briefly propose how they would manage it.