

Call for Expression of Interest**Research Co-lead:
State of the Humanitarian System
2026 Edition****Deadline: 31 July 2024**

Applications should be sent by email to alnap@alnap.org by midnight UK time on 31 July. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interview. Submissions may be reviewed on a rolling basis

If you have questions about the scope or qualifications for this work, please get in touch with the team at the above email address.

1. Consultancy in brief

ALNAP is seeking Expressions of Interests (EOI) from highly experienced and qualified consultants to serve as the Research Co-Lead for the next (2026) edition of the ALNAP **State of the Humanitarian System Report (SOHS)** alongside ALNAP's internal research lead. EOIs are welcomed from consultants based in any country and consultants from crisis affected countries are particularly encouraged to apply. Depending on the applications received, ALNAP will consider appointing two external Research Co-Leads to reflect a variety of experience.

The duration of the contract will be from mid-2024 to early-2027. Time commitments requested within that period are outlined below

2. Details of role and person specification

The Research Co-Lead(s) will work with a designated counterpart in the ALNAP Secretariat to undertake the analysis and writing of the 2026 State of the Humanitarian System Report. Working closely with the ALNAP Secretariat lead, the individual(s) will be responsible for the integration and analysis of descriptive data (for Section I of the Report) and the evaluative assessments (for Sections II and III of the Report) and will have involvement in the design and undertaking of all research components. The Research Co-Lead(s) will also be responsible for writing substantial parts of the final report and will be expected to contribute to the production of multiple communications products and launch events. The specific authorship approach and team management structure for the report will be agreed with the ALNAP Secretariat during the Inception Phase.

The main research and writing period will take place between mid-2024 and early 2026. The amount of time required at different phases will be discussed in more detail with applicants but will vary over the duration of the contract. It is estimated that concerted time will be required during the inception of the project, followed by periodic oversight during the main research period, as different component leads conduct the research, significant engagement will then be needed during the analysis phase, and potential full-time engagement during the main writing period. Up to 20 days will also be required to support continued sharing and reflection on the report findings in the year after the launch of the report that is scheduled for mid-2026.

We will appreciate the opportunity to discuss the time commitments and staging more with applicants.

3. Your Profile

Essential characteristics:

- Previous experience with authorship or significant research contributions to flagship reports in the humanitarian sector or a relevant field
- Experience in designing and using mixed methods research frameworks
- Minimum 5 years' experience in research on humanitarian assistance
- Proven track record of delivering large, complex projects to deadline
- Proven track record of working in/leading diverse research teams and working collaboratively on research outputs, including examples of working in respectful partnership with researchers from multiple contexts

Desirable characteristics:

- Significant expertise in a variety of social science methods and in applying these methods to evaluate and understand humanitarian contexts
- Research experience in crisis-affected countries
- Experience with producing short or creative communications products to accompany research reports or communicate research findings

4. How to apply

Expressions of interest should include:

- Current CV
- Covering letter presenting your interest in the role and experience working on mixed methods research, flagship reports and working in consortia. Providing examples of previous experience in relation to the essential and desired characteristics;
- Day rate in GBP

5. Terms of Reference

About the SOHS

The ALNAP [State of the Humanitarian System Report](#) (SOHS) is an independent study that compiles the latest statistics on the size and scope of the humanitarian system and assesses overall performance and progress of global humanitarian response. The report is ALNAP's flagship publication and is a critical element of ALNAP's strategic focus on monitoring and reporting on system-wide performance.

A pilot exercise and four subsequent editions (2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022) have already provided a baseline and an analysis of performance between 2008 and 2021. The sixth edition is expected to adopt a similar methodology to the 2018 report focused on key policy questions with longitudinal links to the OECD DAC criteria and through the production of new research components designed to provide a more in-depth understanding of performance on certain criteria. ALNAP will also be seeking to strengthen its partnership approach to conducting case study research in crisis-affected countries.



The main objective however will remain the same: to gather and synthesise evidence to form an overall picture of the global humanitarian system and indicate how well it is serving the needs of peoples affected by conflict and crises. Specifically, the report will provide a description of the shape and composition of the global humanitarian system and an assessment of its progress and performance over time.

Content and key issues

The report is expected to contain three main sections. Section one will provide a definition and description of the architecture of the humanitarian system(s) and section two and three will provide an analysis of global humanitarian performance in its totality, focusing respectively on what it is achieving and how it is working.

Section One is expected to include:

- Quantification and mapping of the system's principal actors; including technical countries of operation, annual humanitarian expenditure and staffing numbers. As far as possible this is expected to be broken down between different phases of emergency response and other areas including preparedness/risk reduction, resilience, recovery and development. A focus is required on newly acknowledged actors and their engagement with the international system.
- Financial analysis of global humanitarian funding trends; including a breakdown of the overall volume of financial resources across donors, agencies, regions, countries and types of crisis; and a differentiation between funding channels such as CERF, CHFs/ERFs, bilateral granting and government to government contributions. Efforts should also be made to assess the contribution made by diaspora groups through remittances and other forms of support accessed by people affected by crisis outside of the channels noted above.
- An assessment of the humanitarian case-load; a description of global coverage including types and locations of international emergencies; types of emergency; sectoral/technical breakdown of responses and identification of gaps.

Section Two and Three should provide:

- An assessment of Performance: Questions to be addressed include: how has the Humanitarian system performed on the basis of key policy questions, reflecting longitudinal connections to the OECD DAC criteria? How does this period compare with previous SOHS periods, what are emerging key trends and policy issues?
- An analysis of Change: Questions to be addressed include: what are the major drivers for change and are they external or internal to the humanitarian system? what trends are discernible and what are the implications for future response?

Across those two elements:

- Section two will largely focus on what the system has achieved, asking such questions as: does it reach the right people? Does it provide the right support? Does it work? Does it do harm?
- Section three will largely focus on how the system is operating, asking such questions as: does the system treat people with dignity and accountability? Does it enable local action? Does the system uphold its principles? Does the system connect with longer-term priorities?

In addition to those three main sections, short 'focus chapters' may also be included to explore how the system is responding to specific crisis types and challenges.

Methods

The methodology is expected to use mixed methods and draw on the pilot study and the four earlier editions. The study period will include a four-year period of January 2022-December 2025. There are some components of the



methodology that will remain fixed in order to allow for meaningful comparison to the baseline data of the previous SOHS iterations, however, ALNAP is seeking to explore ways to ensure stronger partnership engagement with local researchers within this addition. ALNAP is open to adding components to the methodology or adapting existing components that add robustness and a range of perspectives to the overall study and welcomes proposals that outline how this might be done.

Several consultants/consortia will be contracted to support the delivery of the different research components. It is expected that the consultants/consortium will discuss the methods in detail with the ALNAP Secretariat and SOHS advisory group. Methods will include:

(i) An evaluation synthesis. The consultants/consortium are expected to develop criteria from which to choose a sample of evaluations for review. This may include categories of intervention, types of evaluations, scope, and level of focus and funder. Additional substantive criteria may also be used such as focus on particular issues, methods and key conclusions. The findings from the synthesis are expected to be weighted for 'level of confidence', which may include a review of the frequency and relative importance of key issues, using a scale for scoring. A precise method for this is expected to be submitted as part of the inception report.

(ii) Literature review. This is expected to be a qualitative exercise to examine key issues and emerging trends.

(iii) Global Practitioner Survey. The survey instrument will be based upon previous SOHS iterations and will be tailored to specific groups including INGOs/IOs, local NGOs, Red Cross/Crescent Movement, and UN Agencies. The survey questions should focus on eliciting information from respondents relating to the key policy questions in the report and their own experience of change over the previous four-year period. The survey should be in multiple languages. The survey instrument should also be pilot tested and reviewed by specialist peer reviewers.

(iv) Key Informant Interviews. A target of 50 key information interviews with senior humanitarian decision-makers should be undertaken using a semi-structured approach based on key questions. The latter is expected to be developed by the consultants/consortium in cooperation with the ALNAP Secretariat. The final list is expected to be categorised and weighted according to key stakeholder groups including cluster leads (both global and national), humanitarian coordinators, key NGOs (both international and national), UN agencies (at HQ and field level), the private sector, donors and academics, government actors in crisis affected countries, including NDMA's. Transcriptions of the interviews are expected to be made securely available to the core team.

(v) In-country research. Data should be gathered first hand from aid providers and recipients of humanitarian aid in a sample of locations yet to be decided. Data should consist of qualitative information from focus group discussions and interviews. This component will seek to work with local researchers/institutions and explore issues of global concern and of context-specific importance in different locations to be determined in discussion with the ALNAP Secretariat and Research Co-Lead(s).

(vi) Recipient surveys. Surveys of recipients of assistance, remote and/or in situ, will be conducted in approximately three emergency locations with the aim of giving a stronger voice to people affected by crisis. The locations will be chosen to complement the in-country research. In difficult access situations consideration should be given to using cell phone networks using text messaging or inter-active voice response (IVR).

(vii) Thematic studies. This component was introduced in the last edition of the report, designed to address gaps in the existing literature and understanding of performance. These thematic studies will undertake original empirical research to examine issues pertaining to effectiveness (e.g. how the humanitarian system is adapting to climate change, how it is tackling the challenges of protracted displacement, how it is connecting with actors outside of the 'formal' humanitarian system, etc that relate to the effectiveness, efficiency or impact of the system in the study period..

Analysis

i) A review of key policy questions, with consideration of the OECD DAC Criteria. The analysis of performance should be made on the basis of key policy questions of relevance to the contemporary humanitarian sector, but with consideration of longitudinal connections to the OECD DAC criteria. The consultants/consortium is expected to review the assumptions and indicators underlying the current list of policy research questions and

interpretation of the criteria (as in previous reports). If appropriate, revisions should be made.

ii) Analysis using new research components. The consultants/consortium is expected to review recent work on humanitarian performance related to key international initiatives – for example, the Grand Bargain 3.0, Flagship Initiative and Pledge for Change, etc. to identify additional criteria or commitments that can be used to assess the performance of the system.

iii) Commentary on policy developments /major issues and recommendations. The report should highlight the major issues emerging in the study period. On the basis of feedback from the SOHS expert reference group, the report should not present specific recommendations, but an indication should be given as to the broad areas for improvement.

iv) Scoring of the OECD criteria. To allow for longitudinal analysis across the previous reports, using the weighted data from the evaluation synthesis and both quantitative and qualitative data from the surveys and studies, an indicative score should be given to each of the OECD DAC criteria, as presented in the conclusions of the 2022 edition.

Deliverables

For all deliverables, the Research Co-Lead(s) is/are expected to work in partnership with a counterpart in the ALNAP Secretariat, in collaboration with the ALNAP Secretariat and with the consultants contracted to carry out the work on the individual research components. The Research Co-Lead(s) and leads for the different research components outlined in the methodology above may be located in different countries globally.

Consultancy inception plan

Initially, the Co-Lead(s) will work with the ALNAP Secretariat to agree an approach to manage of the research components, the data collection and analysis processes, and the planned authorship approach, with clearly designated responsibilities. This should be completed within the first 4 weeks of the consultancy.

SOHS 2026 Inception report

The Inception Report is expected to include a detailed methodology designed to provide the best possible evidence from which to measure performance. This should include a description of data sources, data collection and analysis methods/tools, indicators, a triangulation/validation plan, a financial overview, and importantly the best methods for incorporating the views of people affected by crisis.

The inception report will also provide a detailed stakeholder analysis and account of how national organisations/groups and people affected by crisis will be engaged. It will also describe how the study will reach vulnerable groups and what techniques will be used, such as use of SMS, focus groups etc. The advantages and limitations of these methods should be clearly explained.

In addition, adherence to a code of ethics in gathering, treatment and use of data collected should be made explicit, and a plan for safely and responsibly storing and sharing raw data with the ALNAP Secretariat should be provided. A time line and plan for the in-country research work should also be included.

The report should also include an initial template for the final report, and initial ideas for dissemination based on discussions with the ALNAP Communications team.

The Research Co-Lead(s) will be expected to provide substantial inputs to all aspects of the Inception Report, including the development of an analysis template and coding frame for use by the consultants undertaking the research components.

Key informant interviews

The Research Co-Lead(s) will undertake a minimum of 50 KIIs over the research period with humanitarian decision-makers at both operational and policy levels, as well as experts outside the humanitarian sector. KIIs will



either be recorded, or will draw on detailed notes, which will serve as a deliverable from the Consultant. The Research Co-Lead(s) will be responsible for drafting a list of targeted KIIs that cover a diversity of experience and perspectives, informed by the overall research framework.

Data collection & analysis meetings with consultants

Throughout the contract, the Research Co-Lead(s) will participate in regular updates with research component leads on their data collection and will also co-design the agenda and approach to two in-depth analysis meetings with the consultants over the research period.

Draft chapter outlines

Before drafting the report, the Research Co-Lead(s) and the ALNAP Secretariat counterpart will produce draft chapter outlines. These outlines will be constructed in discussion with the research component leads and the relevant members of the ALNAP Secretariat.

Draft report

This should be a clean draft of the report developed by the research Co-Leads and the ALNAP Secretariat counterpart, with the support of a copy editor.

Report Critique/Peer Review

The draft report will be reviewed by the SAG and the Secretariat with sector experts or academics requested to review specific sections related to their area of expertise. All comments will be captured in a comment matrix and an explanation of how the comments have been responded to should be provided. The authors’ independence will be respected.

Final report

The design and formatting of the report will be carried out in conjunction with the ALNAP Communications team. The final report is expected to be delivered by May 2026 with a launch in September 2026, subject to ongoing discussions with the ALNAP Secretariat.

Communications products & Launch events

The Research Co-Lead will work with the ALNAP Communications team and ALNAP Secretariat SOHS Lead to produce a range of smaller communications products connected to the Report and will be expected to advise on the content of these products throughout the research process. The State of the Humanitarian System Report is launched in multiple countries worldwide and it is expected that the Research Co-Lead(s) will participate in launch event preparation and delivery, including potential travel if appropriate. They will also be expected to support a range of in-person (where appropriate) and remote briefings for different events/organisations across the humanitarian system following the initial launch of the report to support discussion of the findings of the report and its implications for different actors. At the end of the dissemination period, the Research Co-Lead(s) will help to draw together reflections on the process to support future iterations of the report.

Deadlines for deliverables

	FY2024/25	FY2025/26	FY2026/27
Consultancy inception plan			
SOHS 2022 Inception report			
Key informant interviews			

Data collection & analysis meetings with consultants			
Draft chapter outlines			
Draft report			
Report Critique/Peer Review			
Final report			
Communications products & Launch events			

Management arrangements

ALNAP Secretariat

The consultant(s) will primarily work with a SOHS Lead counterpart in the ALNAP Secretariat. S/he/they may also be asked to provide occasional updates to the ALNAP Director, and be expected to liaise with ALNAP Operations and Communications teams on relevant issues.

Support and advisory group (SAG)

The report will benefit from the support of a SAG who will sign off on the inception report, provide comments on drafts and provide contacts and advise on specific elements of the work. The SAG may also help facilitate in-country studies through their contact networks. Communications with the SAG will be made through ALNAP's Head of Research.

Reporting

The consultant will provide regular updates and monthly verbal performance reports throughout the reporting period. ALNAP expects a close and collaborative working relationship in this process.

