

Terms of Reference for evaluation of the project

“Development of inclusive rural cooperatives, improvement of infrastructure and capacity building of community based organizations”

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of Shen NGO

Shen NGO was established in 1988, by a group of professors and students of Yerevan Polytechnic Institute to address some of the urgent humanitarian problems that people of Armenia faced. As time passed and the situation changed a shift from outreach projects to Integrated Community Development projects was made. Considering the potential vital role of Market Forces in income generation for rural population, Shen NGO took a facilitative leadership role and has been engaged in dealing with market players alongside the value chain aiming to secure a sustainable outcomes of Shen NGO economic development projects.

Shen NGO is involved in development endeavours in over 350 rural communities of Armenia.

1.2 Introduction to the project - Matter of evaluation: Shen NGO project E-ARM-2019-0340

The subject matter of the evaluation is the project titled: *Development of inclusive rural cooperatives, improvement of infrastructure and capacity building of community based organizations*. It is implemented by Shen NGO and funded by *Brot für die Welt*. Project Duration is from 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

The development goal

The project development goal is to contribute to the sustainable development of agriculture in Armenia through improved legislation and policy framework in agricultural cooperation, the establishment and demonstration of successful pilot models of cooperation. The project contributes to the social and economic empowerment of vulnerable citizens in rural Armenia and offers them a long-term perspective to stay and generate income within their communities.

The objectives of the project on outcome level are

Objective 1: The legal basis for the establishment and operation of agricultural cooperatives is improved.

Objective 2: Cooperatives and initiative groups have access to manufacturing and processing machinery, irrigation systems and other supporting infrastructure.

Objective 3: Cooperatives and initiative groups apply modern agricultural technologies.

After the war on Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, an addition grant within the project was approved adding another objective.

Objective 4: The socio-economic situation of the forcibly displaced people has improved.

Geographic coverage

The project targets 50 rural communities of Aragatsotn, Lori, Tavush, Shirak, Gegharkunik, Syunik Vayots Dzor, Kotayk marzes of Armenia and Baghramyan subregion of Armavir marz. The villages have been selected based on Shen poverty criteria approved by the General Assembly of the organization held on the 1st of June 2019.

Target Groups – direct beneficiaries

At the start of each project year information sessions were organized in 8 marzes of Armenia during which the selection criteria, the project vision and proposed interventions were presented to potential beneficiary groups. The criteria for selection of beneficiary groups are presented below:

- Cooperatives / producer groups should consist of minimum 10 acting or potential members;
- Members should be small-scale farmers with land-plots not exceeding 5 ha;
- The cooperative or the producer group should have at least 1 homogeneous agricultural production;
- Potential for joint production and/or marketing activities, ability for joint decision making
- Willingness of the cooperatives or the producer groups to be involved in high-value production oriented on the market
- Ability and willingness to make monetary and in-kind contributions in the infrastructure rehabilitation projects (at least 10% cash contribution)
- Cooperatives / producer groups uniting young farmers and women groups will have a privilege.

Other relevant stakeholders

Ministry of Economics, regional state bodies (marzpetarans), community councils, partner NGOs, *Brot für die Welt* (Bread for the World, donor).

The last on place external expert evaluation took place in 2013. However, internal project monitoring takes place on a monthly, quarterly and semi annual basis. In addition, several on place visits, reviews and evaluations took place by Bread for the World.

The purpose of the evaluation is to review and document the achievements of the project and to determine the extent to which the objectives of the project are achieved. The evaluation report will outline the lessons learnt and formulate recommendations that will contribute to the knowledge and support the construction and implementation of future projects.

2. Cause and objective of the evaluation

Shen NGO and Bread for the World commission this project evaluation for the following reasons.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project based on project results,
- to consolidate the results of the project in last project year until its finalisation, and

- to formulate project and policy recommendations, document and share lessons learnt to support the design of future interventions in this field.

3. Key Questiones

The key evaluation criteria against which accomplishments of the project will be measured are defined by five OECD DAC criteria (Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Impact). With reference to the DAC criteria, the following questions are to be answered:

Relevance:

- How relevant and timely was the project to the identified challenges at the country-level?
- To which extent do the objectives of the project match the needs of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders?

Effectiveness:

- To what extent have the expected objectives of the project been achieved?
- Which further steps must be taken in order to achieve them until the end of the project?
- How effective was the project strategy to implement the project activities?
- Which activities particularly functioned well in terms of bringing about outcomes and which activities did not generate sufficient results?
- Were the project activities consistent with the project objectives?
- Was advocacy and lobbying effectively conducted?
- Were relevant stakeholders engaged in the project?
- What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various stakeholders during the implementation of the project?
- Were the project schedules met and activities implemented within planned time schedule?

Sustainability:

- How far has the policy framework improved at the favor of cooperatives?
- To which extent are successful cooperation models rooted in beneficiary communities so that after the project end community members can continue its work?
- Will the infrastructure investments foreseeably have lasting positive effects on the beneficiary communities?

Efficiency:

- To what extent were the planned activities conducted on time?
- How economically viable are the project incurred costs in relation to the deliverables and effects produced?
- To which extent were the financial resources used according to the plan?

Impact:

- How and to what extent has the project contributed to strengthening the policy environment for cooperative movement development in Armenia?
- How and to what extent has the project succeeded to develop successful cooperation pilot models?
- How and to which degree did the project contribute to income generation and poverty reduction in targeted areas (including for women headed households)?
- How and to what extent have the project interventions affected the environmental situation on the community level?
- Which concrete steps shall be taken in the next phase and which objective(s) shall be pursued with regard to this overall development goal?
- Which project measures are thinkable to increase positive and decrease negative impacts?

4. Methodology

The methods and evaluation design should take into account OECD DAC quality standards for Development Evaluation and cross cutting issues on gender, inclusion and environmental impact. The external evaluator is expected to conduct a participatory evaluation ensuring meaningful involvement of project staff, project beneficiaries, policy makers, other stakeholders and interested parties.

The evaluator should

- Conduct desk research, analyses of existing secondary information, project reports, and policy documents to develop a further understanding of the project.
- Prepare semi structured questionnaire and conduct on place interviews
- Prepare and conduct round table discussions
- Prepare and conduct open end face to face interviews
- Analyze quantitative and qualitative information
- Conduct a debriefing workshop
- Write a report in English language

A workshop with the project staff will be organized at the final stage of the evaluation in order to present the findings and verify them, and to give advice on a potential follow-up phase.

5. Time frame and expected products

The evaluation should start on March 7 and be finished the latest on 7 of April. The evaluation should take overall 23 working days.

The Evaluation report shall not be submitted later than March 31 2022.

	Activity	Working Days	Payment
1.	<u>Clarification Meeting:</u>	3 days	30% of the payment after

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss dates, logistical and/or other necessary support, methodology, boundaries Submission of Inception Report		signing the contract
2.	<u>Secondary data collection and analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shen NGO provides the project reports, other available documents 	3 days	
3	<u>On place evaluation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> visits to project area, on place data collection, round table discussions, meetings with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders 	7 days	
4	<u>Data analysis and drafting evaluation report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present draft report for review 	7 days	30% of the payment
5	<u>Debriefing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results and recommendations are presented to Shen NGO and Bread for the World Workshop on the design of a potential follow-on project 	1 day	
6	<u>Revision and submission of final report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment and approval of the report in English language, maximum number of pages of which will be 100. 	2 day	40% of the payment
Total		<u>23 days</u>	

6. Key qualifications of the evaluator

Quality

Performance standards for the successful conduct of the assignment include compliance with the terms of reference, quality dimensions of the outputs, and timeliness. These will set the basis for acceptance of deliverables, and full payment of fees.

Qualification of the evaluator

- Advanced university degree (Master's degree or higher) in evaluation methodologies, poverty reduction, sustainable development, policy support or another relevant field.
- In-depth knowledge in poverty reduction and sustainable development, technical cooperation and policy support, minimum 5 years in program evaluation and methodologies preferably in developing countries.
- Analytical and writing skills in program evaluation, lessons learnt papers, policy documents in relation to development projects and programs.
- Proven experience in working with policy makers, NGOs, international development organizations, and institutions.

- Fluency in oral and written English is required.

7. Content of the evaluator's offer

Candidates for the evaluation should submit the following documents:

- Professional resume
- Technical proposal: short explanation and justification of the methods to be deployed by the evaluator (maximum 3 pages)
- Financial proposal: Complete cost estimate that includes both, the fee as well as any ancillary costs to be incurred, such as transport, accommodation, taxes, fees and costs of workshops in the scope of the evaluation etc.

The requested proposal should be submitted via the emails: info@shen.am hminassian@shen.am in cc, not later than by 25 February, 2022, 18.00 pm GMT+4 time. Please insert words "Evaluation offer" in the email subject line.