**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Final Evaluation of the Resilient Agriculture and Livelihoods Initiative for Socio-economic Empowerment (REALISE) Project - Phase I and II**

## BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

ActionAid is a global movement of people fighting for women’s rights, social justice and an end to poverty. Fighting for a world where every person enjoys the right to a life with dignity. We work in 45 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas and our expertise lies in rights-based community-led development, working through partnerships with people living in poverty and their organizations. ActionAid Afghanistan (AAA) has been working in Afghanistan since 2002 and is a member of the global federation. It is working around four strategic priorities (SPs) - Women’s Empowerment, Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security, Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Response, and Good Governance.

ActionAid Afghanistan (AAA) in partnership with ActionAid Australia (AAAus) has been implementing Resilient Agriculture and Livelihoods Initiative for Socio-economic Empowerment (REALISE) project funded by the Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia (DFAT) since June 2014 through local partners (OHW, LSO and PAC-O) in Balkh, Bamiyan and Jawzjan provinces in Afghanistan. The project is ending in June 2021. The first ‘Foundation’ phase of the project ended in August 31st, 2018 and subsequently implementation continued in Bamiyan and Balkh. The overall goal of this second ‘Extension’ phase of the project is to ensure local communities in Balkh and Bamiyan provinces in Afghanistan participate meaningfully to increase their resilience to shocks and seasonal constraints to their food and livelihood security. The project has its own Theory of Change which is that community women and men will be resilient if they are food and nutrition secure, have economic assets, are members of strong groups that are taking collective action towards decision-making in policies and service provision

AAA has already conducted a Completion Report for the Foundation Phase of the project in late 2018. AAA is now planning to conduct an external independent evaluation of the impact of the whole project (identifying the relative contribution of the Foundation Phase and the Extension Phase where possible) to document the relevance and effectiveness of the project interventions, test the project theory of change and the efficiency of project implementation from various stakeholder perspectives primarily the communities (men and women in communities), Community Development Councils (CDCs), government, Community Based Organization (CBOs) and other relevant stakeholders. In particular, the evaluation is expected to discuss how the Extension Phase added to and consolidated achievements of the Foundation Phase particularly as these are expressed in the sustainability of interventions and the resilience of local communities.

## About the Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme (AACRS):

Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme (AACRS) is a rural development program of the Australian government. The scheme was commenced in 2014 with the overall goal to improve the livelihoods and resilience of rural communities in Afghanistan. The AACRS works in partnership with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the government of Australia (DFAT), and the Government of Afghanistan. The INGO partners in phase II are ActionAid, AKDN, Oxfam and World Vision, which is supported by Afghanistan Center for Excellence (ACE) the scheme coordinator. The NGOs work in different locations with the exception of Panjab District in Bamyan where there is overlap between ActionAid and Aga Khan Foundation.

AACRS has the overall objective of improving resilience and livelihoods for Afghan rural communities with four core outcomes:

1. Improvement to agricultural production (and its logical contribution to food security, nutrition and incomes);

2. Improvement in natural resource management

3. Improvement in access to markets; and

4. Diversified livelihoods (and its contribution to overall resilience, incomes and dietary diversity).

It also includes seven “cross cutting themes” related to:

1. Partnership

2. Capacity development

3. Good governance

4. Gender inclusion

5. Disability inclusion

6. Pro‐poor, and

7. Do No Harm

There are 4 key themes that will be assessed across the scheme in the final evaluation including resilience, women’s empowerment, inclusive decision-making and partnership. A standardisation will occur across the scheme to obtain data to indicate how well these have been achieved.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Resilient Agriculture and Livelihood Initiatives for Socio-economic Empowerment (REALISE) is a seven year project implemented under the Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme (AACRS) in two separate phases (the Foundation Phase from June 2014 – August 2018, and the Extension phase from September 2018 – June 2021). In the Foundation Phase the project has worked in 97 villages with 12,269 households in three provinces of Balkh, Bamiyan and Jawzjan and in the Extension Phase the project is being implemented in 68 villages in Balkh and Bamiyan provinces with 9,967 households. The overall goal of the project in the Foundation Phase was Rural communities in Jawzjan, Balkh and Bamiyan Provinces of Afghanistan participate meaningfully to increase their resilience to shocks and seasonal constraints to their food and livelihood security. In the Extension Phase the goal was the same but Jawzjan was not included.

The project has three outcomes:

1. Increased food & nutritional security for vulnerable men, women and children in participating households
2. An increased economic asset base for vulnerable men and women in participating households.
3. Participating groups of vulnerable men and women influencing decision-making, service provision and policies affecting their food and livelihood security

## Project Implementation Approach

ActionAid and three local NGO partners Organization of Human Welfare (OHW), Labor Spring Organization (LSO in the Extension Phase) and People’s Action for Change (PAC-O in the Foundation Phase) have worked with community men and women using ActionAid’s Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), ensuring close involvement of men, women and their communities and other stakeholders including government, CBOs/Local Institutions and other NGOs.

REALISE utilizes elements of ActionAid’s well‐established Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) approach which is grounded in the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and promotes local solutions for food and livelihood security that are combined with modern technologies and scientific knowledge. CRSA ensures that vulnerable men and women have local food production systems that are more resilient to climate change and relevant to local contexts and needs, thus ensuring greater sustainability in the longer term. These factors should contribute to an improved food and economic base, which is the overall AACRS program outcome, as well as increased capacity for participating groups to engage and influence for an enabling environment for these issues in future. ActionAid has used three practical courses of action as part of REALISE; empowerment of vulnerable groups, building solidarity among organized groups and networks; and influencing relevant policies and implementation, the program strategy is expected to result in increased equity and reduce underlying causes of food and livelihood insecurity.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the consultancy is to assess outcomes/impact of the project against the stated results/outcomes of the project as detailed in the project’s monitoring and evaluation framework, theory of change of the project and high level outcomes of the AACRS (resilience, women empowerment, inclusive decision making and partnership) in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project delivery, sustainability and impact over the baseline status of the project participants. The consultancy will provide an insight to project best practices and lessons learned and strength of partnership including project’s participation in the AACRS (described in earlier section) and collaboration with relevant stakeholders including line ministries and departments of Government of Afghanistan. The study will also capture information on the scheme (AACRS) level indicators and outcomes resilience, women empowerment, inclusive decision making and partnerships.

In addition to these, the evaluation will also capture and assess the unintended effects, both positive and negative and will recommend future directions/priorities for improvement in upcoming programs of ActionAid Afghanistan and Australia.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The following specific objectives and key questions are indicative of the types of questions that should be addressed in the impact/final evaluation. The major interventions of the project will be assessed through the 5 evaluation criteria namely, (i) relevance, (ii) efficiency, (iii) effectiveness, (iv) sustainability and (v) impact.

## 4.1. Relevance

The analysis of relevance would focus on the extent to which the design was effective/appropriate:

* Supported women and men in communities to establish and achieve their vision and objectives and support them to claim their rights
* Supported women stakeholders of the project to empower and influence local level decision making for their rights
* Analysed the project’s coherence with the food security and livelihoods strategy and policy of the country. Targeting interventions for the development and increased resilience of resource-poor food insecure households.
* Analysed lessons learned from on-going experience and ensured they have been incorporated into project implementation
* Analysed and adjusted assumptions/risks
* Established appropriate management and coordination arrangements

## 4.2. Efficiency

The assessment of efficiency should focus on:

* Costs and value-for-money: how far the costs of the project were justified by the benefits from the perspective of community women and men
* The extent of links established with local institutions and service providers
* The extent of links established between women groups and relevant stakeholders, and quality of the relationship established
* Technical assistance provided by the project: how well did it help to provide and/or facilitate appropriate solutions and develop local capacities to define and produce results.

## 4.3. Effectiveness

The analysis of effectiveness should focus on the following.

* Was the project theory of change relevant and effective in developing community resilience (this is that when people are food and nutrition secure, have economic assets and engage in collective action they will be more resilient)?
* Were people more food secure (consider availability, access, stability and diversity of food groups separately and as a whole)?
* Were groups/collectives strong? Will they sustain into the future? Consider power relations, collective action, ability to resolve conflict, resource availability and use, relationships with others etc)
* Did people have more economic assets? Of what type? What role did they play in resilience?
* Assess the extent to which women and men understand their rights, the policies and laws with which they are linked and how they have been supported to claim them.
* If the assumptions and risk assessments at results level were adequate and valid, or unforeseen external factors intervened, how flexible were management to ensure that the results achieved their purpose; and how well were they was supported in this by key stakeholders;
* Whether the balance of responsibilities between the various stakeholders was appropriate?
* What were the unintended/unplanned results?
* Whether any shortcomings at this level were due to a failure to take account of cross-cutting or over-arching issues such as gender, disability, environment and government policies during implementation.

## 4.4. Sustainability

The analysis of the sustainability should focus on the following.

* Ownership of objectives and achievements, e.g. how far all stakeholders including community women and men and their organisations were consulted on the objectives from the outset, and whether they agreed with them and remained in agreement throughout the duration of the project
* Institutional capacity, e.g. the degree of commitment of all parties involved, the extent to which the project is embedded in local institutional structures; if it involved creating a new institution, justification of the creation and how far good relations with existing institutions were established; whether the institution appears likely to be capable of continuing the flow of benefits after the project ends.
* Socio-cultural factors, e.g. whether the project is in tune with local perceptions of needs and of ways of producing and sharing benefits; whether it respects local power-structures, status systems and beliefs, and if it seeks to change any of those, how well-accepted are the changes both by the target group and by others; how well it was based on an analysis of such factors, including target group participation in design and implementation; and the quality of relations between the external project staff and local communities;
* Economic sustainability, i.e. how well the benefits (economic returns) from the project interventions are and will be established and maintained
* Technical (technology) issues, e.g. whether (i) the technology, knowledge, process or service provided fits in with existing needs, culture, traditions, skills or knowledge; (ii) community members had time and skills to adapt the technologies into their own systems, document these and advocate for continued support (iii) alternative technologies were considered, where there was a choice; and
* Wherever relevant, cross-cutting issues such as gender equity, environmental impact and good governance; were appropriately accounted for and managed from the outset of the project.
* At community level: to what extent the improved socio-economic status and food security and resilience will be sustained.
* The level of continuity of results and achievements which can be expected under ex-post project conditions including capacity development of associations/collectives facilitated by the project.
* The degree to which Food Security Networks (FSNs)s, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) Reflect Circles (RCs), associations and women entrepreneur groups have linked in with other networks locally, provincially or nationally to increase their influence on government and private sector and the extent to which these links will endure.
* The degree to which the FSNs. RCs, associations and entrepreneurial groups will continue to engage with Government beyond the project.
* The degree to which men and women in community are empowered and are able to influence local level decision effecting their food/nutrition security and livelihoods
* The degree to which the women groups are empowered and are able to claim their rights and influence local level decision making processes
* The extent to which men and women in communities have improved their understanding of the rights and are able to do advocacy with relevant departments

## 4.5. Impact

Impact denotes the relationship between the project’s purpose and goal, that is the extent to which the benefits received by the target community women and men had a wider overall effect on larger numbers of people in the sector or region or in the country as a whole. At impact level the analysis includes the following.

* To what extent the planned goal have been achieved, and how far that was directly due to the project;
  + Are people more resilient, are they able to withstand crises, adapt to worsening or new crises and transform power relationships and livelihoods with Government and other stakeholders? What role did the project play in this?
* To what extent the project impacted on women's empowerment including individual empowerment, access to resources, policy/practice changes and collective action (following Rao-Kelleher) .
* Is there more inclusive decision-making?

Were partnerships effective in improving livelihoods and resilience? Will they sustain beyond the project life)

* How far economic and social developments beyond the level of the immediate recipients of support (inputs, training, groups) were enhanced?
* If there were unplanned impacts, how they affected the overall impact (include unpaid work and how that plays out with paid work for women and levels of violence)
* Impact of the project on improving the living conditions, education, hygiene, health, social status of the communities
* Impact of the project on cross cutting issues such as environment and good governance.

## 4.6. Other Specific questions/ issues:

* Quality and timelines of project implementation
* Adequacy of selection criteria used for selection of the direct participants
* Adequacy of criteria used for selection of interventions
* Interferences in selection of project locations and participants
* Analysis of fund flow system of the project- transparency, leakage etc.
* Analysis of respect and adherence to guidelines, rules and regulations, i.e., MOU, operational manual etc. by all

The evaluation will also identify lessons learnt and give recommendations of general and specific nature to ActionAid Afghanistan and ActionAid Australia.

## REQUESTED SERVICES, INCLUDING SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will follow the mixed-method—qualitative and quantitative survey/interviews. While the consultant will review and finalise the surveys/methodology including analysis framework with ActionAid input, the following steps are expected at minimum:

1. **Desk review**: Conduct desk review of the existing documentation on related to project that will provide information on the project details and status. Documents to be reviewed will include but not limited to:

* REALISE Project proposal and M&E framework (including AACRS common indicators)
* Project theory of change
* Baseline report of the project
* Midterm review report of the project
* Progress/implementation reports (annual to donor)
* Midterm report (AACRS level)
* Relevant strategies of e.g. Dry land farming strategy, national priority program documents of government of Afghanistan
* AACRS level indicators, outcomes and goals and how the project contributed to these

1. **Ethics:** The consultant is expected to present a clear ethical strategy including around consent and handling of information as outlined in ActionAid’s Feminist Research guidelines
2. **Quantitative survey or other tools:** to measure the progress and assessment against the baseline findings following the indicators at result and outcome level and establish the comparison over baseline findings.
3. **Qualitative assessments:**
   1. **Key Informant Interviews** (KII): individual semi-structured interview with relevant Government officials under ministry of rural rehabilitation and development, ministry of Agriculture and livestock, community/village leaders, local Shura/Jirga leaders, Community Development Councils selected project participants and key project staff under partnership and direct service delivery. We expect that women, men and people with disabilities are included
   2. **Focus group discussions** (FGDs): FGDs are to be conducted on various thematic and intervention areas with selected members in each of the working areas. We expect that women, men and people with disabilities are included here and consulted separately
   3. **Stakeholders Consultation**: Stakeholders consultations are expected to be carried out at the national, subnational and community level with relevant stakeholders including Government Officials, Partner Organization staff, Community Development Council Members and other actors of the project areas.
   4. **Collection and preparation of case stories**: Cases would be identified on various thematic areas and framed into good stories of successes reflecting best practices, with good high resolution photographs.
4. **Reporting and Feedback**
   1. **Weekly review and feedback meetings** on the progress and tools developed for the assessment. The consultant needs to provide weekly updates on the progress and circulate minutes for each meeting
   2. **Approval of any revisions to tools** and any new ones by ActionAid before finalization and use at the field level.
   3. Discussions with the AACRS Team and DFAT’s AACRS consultant David Swete-Kelly
   4. **Review and analysis** of information and prepare draft impact assessment report with findings and recommendations.
   5. **A debriefing** session to present findings of the study to ActionAid Management and selected stakeholders.
   6. **Feedback on the draft report** will be provided by various stakeholders within ActionAid, consultant is to accommodate the feedback and to be reflected in the final report to an agreeable extent
   7. **Preparation and submission of final report**

During the evaluation work the consultant (s) will maintain close consultation with the ActionAid Afghanistan (Head of Program and REALISE Project Manager) provide time to time update on the progress of the evaluation and other matters of interest.

## KEY DELIVERABLES:

Following are the expected deliverables from the consultant (s) under this assignment:

* 1. An inception report/evaluation plan containing study methodologies, quantitative survey design and analysis framework and activity plan with timeline, to be agreed mutually. This plan will also be reviewed by the AACRS Consultant, David Swete-Kelly
  2. Draft Report on a) quantitative survey showing comparison of findings against baseline findings and b) qualitative assessment of impact/outcomes including recommendations and lessons learned (single report) that includes a clear discussion on how the project has supported communities to strengthen their resilience to shocks and seasonal constraints.
  3. Final report based on the feedback on the draft reports by relevant stakeholders e.g. ActionAid Afghanistan and ActionAid Australia. (single report)

**Note: It is important that the report will be presented using graphics, pictorials especially use of infographic is highly anticipated reflecting interesting findings.**

## BREADTH, DURATION AND EXPECTED TIMELINE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

* 1. **Breadth of the study:** The project has been implemented in 6 Districts under 3 Provinces e.g. Yakawalang and Panjab in Bamyan province; Khamab and Sherbeghan in Jawzjan province; and Kaldar and Dawalatabad in Balkh province. The consultant/s will have to consult with people from 4 of the 6 locations (Jawzjan was not continued in phase II for security reasons). The security situation will determine whether interviews and discussions can take place in project locations, occur remotely or locations where communities can be transported to safely. The COVID situation will determine how many people can be in each focus group discussion
  2. **Duration and Expected Timeline of the Assignment**: The duration of the assignment would be maximum 45 days and expected to be completed by the beginning of March 2021; essentially the assignment has to be started up as soon as the contract process is completed. Interested bidders are, as such, requested to ensure their availability during the time stipulated. Following is a proposed timeline of activities under this assignment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| # | Task | # of Days | Dates |
| 1 | Desk review, preparation and review and finalisaton of tools inluding questionnaire for both quantitative survey and qualitative assessment | 07 |  |
| 3 | Briefing meeting in Kabul, finalising methodologies, and field plan | 02 |  |
| 4 | Field Work including local travel | 15 |  |
| 5 | Data entry, analysis, tabulation | 07 |  |
| 5 | Submission of the first draft report | 05 |  |
| 6 | Presentation of findings/debriefing on the study at Kabul | 01 |  |
| 7 | Preparation and submission of final report | 05 |  |
| 8 | Travel days: to and from Kabul to home base of the consultant in case of expatriates | 03 |  |

## CONSULTANT PROFILE AND TEAM COMPOSITION

ActionAid is looking for an experienced individual (s)/firms with substantial evaluation expertise in fragile and conflict affected states, including Afghanistan. The Evaluator should have experience of primary data collection in Afghanistan. The evaluator should demonstrate clear adherence to the Terms of Reference, have experience and knowledge of resilient livelihoods, women empowerment, organizational development, rights-based approaches and expertise of evaluating livelihood focussed development project. The consultant should have ability to delivering outputs within strict timelines and demonstrate knowledge and experience of managing risks at scale in fragile and conflict affected states.

Expected profile of the lead consultant:

* At least an undergraduate degree, preferably an advanced degree (PhD) in International development, Agriculture, Economics or allied subjects
* Experience in the field of development with particular focus to resilience, livelihoods, food and nutrition security, focussed projects
* Experience in the field of women rights and empowerment in the context of Afghanistan
* Experience of conducting quantitative and qualitative social research, project evaluation and review using participatory approaches.
* Excellent skills in preparing analytical documents/reports using graphics, pictorials especially use of infographic
* Exposure to social, cultural and religious norms of Afghan communities particularly rural communities of Balkh, and Bamiyan Provinces
* Previous experience and willingness to work in a conflicting and unstable security context of Afghanistan is desirable
* An understanding of rights-based approaches

Other requirements:

* Desirable: Understands ActionAid HRBA and resilience framework.
* Desirable: Understands ActionAid feminist research guidance
* Desirable: understanding of livelihoods
* Required Good facilitator skills and capacity to undertake virtual workshops.
* Experience with M&E tools is essential
* Must follow the COVID19 requirements in place in Afghanistan and those recommended by ActionAid Afghanistan

## PAYMENT SCHEDULE AND MODE OF PAYMENT

Mode of Payment:

Transfers against the agreed fees of the intended consultancy services will be made through bank in Afghani upon submission of deliverables as stated above along with an invoice by the consultant as per the following trances:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Advance | 20% of the total contracted amount | After signing the contract and on receipt of the agreed inception report |
| Interim payment | 30% of the total contracted amount | After submission of the 1st draft report |
| Final payment | 50% of the total contracted amount | After submission of final report and agreed by the AA management |

## OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

**Working language:**

* All reports are to be prepared and submitted in English language

**Cost related to field visit and study:**

* Tickets for all domestic flights and all local transportation will be arranged by the consultant in Afghanistan in close coordination with the security focal point of ActionAid in Afghanistan
* Accommodation in Kabul and in the field will be the responsibility of the consultant, however this has to be closely coordinated with ActionAid Afghanistan security focal point.
* The consultant must bring in Personal Protective Equipment and AAAfghanistan will advise on what this will be. They must also follow the COVID requirements in Afghanistan

**Insurance coverage:**

* The consultant (s) will be responsible to purchase Insurance coverage for both the international and domestic travel, health and stay in Afghanistan during performing the assignment. ActionAid will, in no case, bear the cost or responsibility for the insurance coverage for the said purposes.

**Payment of consultation fees:**

* The payment of consultation fees is subject to deduction of Taxes and levies, compliant to the policies of Afghanistan Government, at source.
* Failure to submit reports within agreed timeframe will be subjected to deduction at 0.10% of the agreed contract value for each of the delayed days, unless the submission date is rescheduled, in case of unavoidable circumstance, and agreed in writing between the parties.

**Other statutory obligations:**

* ActionAid Afghanistan Reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without giving any verbal and/or written rationale
* All reports, data and documents prepared during the assignment will be treated as Actionaid Afghanistan property
* The reports/documents or any part, therefore, cannot be sold, used and reproduced in any manner without prior written approval of ActionAid Afghanistan
* The selected consultant should implement the work in coordination with the focal person of ActionAid Afghanistan
* ActionAid Afghanistan or its representatives reserve the right to monitor the quality and progress of the work during the assignment

## HOW TO APPLY

Interest parties/individuals should submit a “letter of intent” to perform the consultancy work with following documents to the addresses given in the Request for Proposal:

1. **Technical Proposal**, not more than 10 pages outlining an approach, methodologies and analysis framework for both quantitative survey and qualitative assessments. The methodology should include an approach/strategy to obtain the perspectives of different genders and people with disabilities.
2. **Financial proposal**: A financial proposal showing the cost of consultant (s) and other relevant costs with breakdown should be annexed with the technical proposal.
3. In case of company/firm, provide summary of experiences and strength that the company is most fit for this consultancy and attach CVs of the consultant to be performing the task and list of engagement of the company with similar type of assignments along with CVs of the Consultant (s) to be engaged in the assignment
4. In case of individual, a comprehensive CV, focussing on the relevant skills and experience of performing similar type of work and prior experiences of completion of assignment like this.
5. Three samples of the relevant work (one of a recent relevant work being undertaken by the proposed consultant).

## APPLICATION DEADLINE AND ADDRESS

Soft copies of the application and relevant documents e.g. technical proposal, financial proposal, company profile and prove of previous relevant experience, CVs of the consultants and agreement on the anticipated timeline should be submitted on or before 4:00 PM, 22 December 2020 to [Procurement.Kabul@actionaid.org](about:blank)