

Terms of Reference

Job title:	International and National Consultants to conduct Final Evaluation of the "Support to Agriculture and Rural Development" SARD Programme in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district
Duty station:	International Consultant - Home based, with one mission to Moldova of 7 working days National Consultant – Chisinau, with field visits
Reference to the project:	Support to Agriculture and Rural Development Programme (SARD)
Contract type:	Individual Contract (IC)
Contract duration:	September 2018 - November 2018 (up to 30 working days for each consultant)
Starting date:	As soon as possible but not later than September 17

I. BACKGROUND

The "Support to Agriculture and Rural Development" SARD Programme is a three-year initiative funded by the European Union, implemented by the UNDP. The main objective of the project is to foster confidence building in the Republic of Moldova by targeting regions and territorial administrative units with special status. People from ATU Gagauzia, Taraclia district and neighboring communities will benefit from improved development opportunities in their localities, grasping the benefits of the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy.

SARD contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of the agro-food sector in the target regions, promotion of local entrepreneurship, creation of jobs and raising income; as well as increasing capacities of local communities to identify development ideas, develop and fundraise resources as well as implement development projects. The project is connecting region's authorities and structures to the national ones, facilitating dialogue and inclusion in development of national strategies, as well as connecting neighboring villages through inter municipal cooperation and implementation of the LEADER/CLLD approach.

The programme has the following components:

Component 1: Enhanced Dialogue and Community Empowerment;
Component 2: Local entrepreneurship and SMEs development;
Component 3: Small-Scale Infrastructure Refurbishment and Promotion of Inter-Municipal Cooperation.

Component 1: Enhanced Dialogue and Community Empowerment;

Activity 1.1: Enhance cooperation on Agriculture and Rural Development between national authorities and regions with special status

Within this activity SARD:

- Conducted analysis of relevant national and regional strategic documents in view of identifying opportunities for supporting the implementation of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development in the targeted region;
- Facilitated development/updating of regional and local development strategies;
- Initiated creation of and currently is an active member of Coordination Committee for introduction of EU LEADER/CLLD approach in Moldova formed under aegis of Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment;

- Performed a legal analysis and recommended the most relevant approach towards establishments of the Local Action Groups (in line with EU Leader approach);
- conducted learning, information sharing events, including study visits in communities outside target area, as well as in EU countries.

Activity 1.2. Develop capacity of local communities (rural inhabitants) to actively participate in the decision-making process and development of their localities. To better integrate the needs of women and men, particularly the most vulnerable into the local development strategies

The Programme focuses on the enhancement of the capacities of local communities to create, develop and manage basic public services, as well as to rehabilitate small-scale social infrastructure to address agriculture and rural development priorities. Because of their local knowledge and mandate, local governments, civil society and other organisations are the best placed to identify needs and constraints of target/vulnerable groups and to provide them with access to services. The Community Mobilisation for Empowerment approach¹ is used and updated in line with the EU LEADER and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach.

The SARD Programme provides training and support for the creation, functioning and management of the cross-sector or commodity-specific 8 Local Action Groups (LAGs) in rural villages from targeted regions. The programme helps with all necessary human resource development, legal aspects, identification of co-financing and governance. The SARD Programme, starting from August 2016 initiated pilot EU LEADER approach activities through a series of sensitizing and mobilizing activities both during regional and national seminars and round tables, and study tours to 5 EU countries to learn from their LEADER experiences. As a result, first 8 Local Action Groups were created in the ATU Gagauzia, Taraclia district and neighboring districts. SARD provided grants to these LAGs to support their operation and finance first rural development projects.

Component 2: Local entrepreneurship and SMEs development:

Activity 2.1.: Strengthen rural business support infrastructure in targeted regions for SMEs development

To contribute directly to decreasing economic deprivation of the targeted regions (Gagauzia, Taraclia and neighbouring communities) and assist development of business support infrastructure the Programme

- Conducted review (capacity development needs assessment) of existing business support infrastructure in the targeted regions (Gagauzia, Taraclia and neighbouring communities), identifying priority actions for supporting its development
- Developed an intervention package to enhance the capacity of the regional rural business support infrastructure; including trainings and technical assistance both at organizational level (regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Incubators etc.) and personal one (specialist business consultants).
- Provided targeted support for the creation of new rural businesses, including with start-up small grants, and mentoring capacity development activities, prioritising women from rural areas and female-headed households.

Activity 2.2. Promote Employability and culture of Entrepreneurship through Comrat Regional Syslab Center

The activity is based on two interlinked components of *employability and entrepreneurship promotion*. It supports skilled unemployed and potential beneficiaries with entrepreneurial ideas to

¹<http://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/poverty/community-mobilization-for-empowerment-of-vulnerable-women-and-m.html>

either find a relevant job on the existing market or start-up a new business.

SYSLAB Comrat Center successfully operates throughout the whole SARD programme period, the results achieved to date are:

- 12 Self-Employment training modules conducted with over 150 persons trained and 90% success rate of employment achieved;
- 8 Entrepreneurship modules conducted with over 100 persons trained, percentage of trainees that started business is 25;
- 4 Calls for innovative entrepreneurial ideas conducted, and 22 micro grants provided;

Component 3: Small-Scale Infrastructure Refurbishment and Promotion of Inter-Municipal Cooperation.

Activity 3.1. Improve management, access and quality of municipal service provision in 20 communities and 7 clusters of communities through inter-municipal cooperation, prioritized by up-dated Local Development Strategies

Activity 3.2. Implementation of small-scale infrastructure projects within 20 communities and 7 clusters of communities

This component is focused on provision of support to **improve local service provision** and **upgrade basic infrastructure in municipalities** in Gagauzia and Taraclia districts, enhancing cooperation across the targeted districts, in line with local development strategies for enhanced rural development. Technical assistance was provided to improve service provision in the areas of LPAs competence like communal services, health, social protection, education, and others. In addition to providing support for upgrading basic small-scale infrastructure, the Programme was focused on **enhancing community cooperation across administrative borders** with different autonomy.

Original Programme document envisaged support for 20 small scale infrastructure projects and 7 Inter-Municipal Cooperation projects. In line with the confidence-building approach, the Gagauzia and Taraclia authorities initiated a request to provide Infrastructure grant support to all 41 communities of targeted region, ensuring higher level of local public authorities' contribution to infrastructure projects.

The proposal was discussed and approved by the SARD's Fourth Board meeting. Thus, the decision to increase the number of projects allowed for an almost complete coverage of the targeted territory and leveraged substantial local funds – to date – 2 300 000 USD with another 500 000 USD in pipeline. Instead of the initially planned **20 per cent requirement**, the local contribution to date approaches **50 per cent**, with some projects having it beyond **70 per cent**. It is important to note that such substantial involvement in SIP projects demonstrates LPAs' **ownership** over the projects and ensures their **sustainability**.

Forty-one SIPs and seven IMC projects will be completed by the Programme end.

The SARD Engineers provided the technical feasibility advice at the stage of formulation of project ideas and ensured technical monitoring and supervision of all infrastructure projects. It is important to mention that most of the infrastructure projects required detailed technical designs. The SARD programme conducted tenders, selected design companies and covered the development of 23 technical designs that were used for further construction works.

II. EVALUATION PURPOSE

As the project ends December 2018, the purpose of this evaluation is to learn from the experience of the Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme with a forward-looking

approach. The Evaluation is expected to clarify underlying factors affecting the situation, highlight unintended consequences (positive and negative) and better design future EU and UN-supported projects and interventions. The UNDP Country Office plans to make use of the exercise as a learning opportunity not only for the offices but also for key partners and stakeholders, as inclusively and as practically possible.

The purpose of the Evaluation is twofold:

- 1) **Review the progress made by the Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme** in fulfilling its agreed outcome and outputs through the planned activities. **Assess how successful confidence building approach was applied and the efficiency and effectiveness** with which resources have been used to generate results and achieve project objectives with special emphasis **on impact and sustainability**.
- 2) Develop **recommendations** for future relevant project interventions beyond 2018, which UNDP Moldova can offer as support to agriculture and rural development both in regions with special status and in Republic of Moldova.

III. EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The **overall objectives** of the evaluation are the following:

1. Provide an objective assessment of the progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and the impact produced so far under the area of intervention.
2. Generate lessons from experiences in the project respective interventions to inform current and future programming at the country level,
3. Provide clear and forward-looking recommendations to suggest effective and realistic strategies by UNDP and partners.

UNDP will make use of the exercise as a learning opportunity for its country office and key partners and stakeholders, as inclusively and practically possible. The findings and recommendations generated by the evaluation should inform the implementation and targeting of activities of future relevant project initiatives.

The scope of the evaluation should incorporate the following **categories of analysis**:

- **Relevance:** the degree to which the purpose of the Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme remains valid and pertinent.
- **Efficiency:** the productivity of the implementation process - how good and how cost efficient the process of transforming inputs into outputs and outcomes was.
- **Effectiveness:** a measure of the extent to which the Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme has contributed to achieve its results through an effective use of their resources.
- **Capacity development:** as a key to **development effectiveness**, the achievement of the SDGs and sustainable local development.
- **Sustainability** – to what extent are the SARD Programme results sustainable, i.e. rights-holders are empowered to claim their rights, taking into consideration the existing capacity, structures and political context in the country.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the 'UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results' and 'Integrated Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations'.

During the evaluation, the consultants are expected to apply the following approaches for data

collection and analysis:

- Desk review of relevant documents (project documents progress reports -midterm/final, donor-specific, etc.);
- Discussions with the Senior Management and programme staff of UNDP Country office;
- Briefing and debriefing sessions with UNDP, EU Delegation to Republic of Moldova and the Government, as well as with other donors and partners
- Interviews with partners and stakeholders (including gathering the information on what the partners have achieved and what strategies they have used)
- Field visits to selected project sites and discussions with project teams, project beneficiaries.

The consultants are particularly encouraged to use participatory methods to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted as part of the evaluation process. They should take measures to ensure data quality, reliability and validity of data collection tools and methods and their responsiveness to gender equality and human rights.

V. DELIVERABLES AND TENTATIVE TIMEFRAME

It is expected that the evaluation will be conducted during the period 15 September–30 November 2018.

Timeframe, deliverables and responsible parties:

Tasks for the International Consultant	Tasks for the National Consultant	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Evaluation methodology and work plan developed and agreed upon. 3 w.d.	Provide inputs to methodology and work plan 1 w.d.	Evaluation Methodology; Work plan	17-20 September
All relevant input documents reviewed 6 w.d.	Background materials for the International Consultant collected. Provided inputs for evaluation outline 7 w.d.	Evaluation outline	17-27 September
Visit to Moldova. Project site visits, interviews with implementers, partners and key stakeholders conducted. 7 w.d.	Field visits and meetings with relevant parties for the International Consultant arranged. Participation in the meetings 10 w.d.	Summary key findings presented to UN Agencies	1-14 October
Drafting of the Evaluation report 8 w.d.	Inputs to the draft Evaluation Report provided 7 w.d.	Draft evaluation report	By 25 October
Debriefing UNDP, EU Delegation to Moldova 2 w.d.	Presentation of the final evaluation report 2 w.d.	On line presentation	By 31 October
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first drafts) 4 w.d.	Inputs to the draft Evaluation Report provided 3 w.d.	Final evaluation report; Relevant knowledge products	By 15 November
Total estimated number of working days – 30, out of which 7 days on mission to Moldova	Total estimated number of working days – 30		

VI. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the evaluation mission must not have been associated with the project's formulation, implementation or monitoring. It is proposed that the evaluation team to be composed of one international and one national consultant.

The International Consultant will undertake one field visits to Moldova (7 working days).

Specifically, the International Consultant will perform the following tasks:

- Lead and manage the evaluation mission and assume overall responsibility for its quality and timeliness;
- Supervise the work of the national expert (during entire evaluation period).
- Design the detailed evaluation methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis), propose detailed work plan and Evaluation outline;
- Briefing with UNDP and EU Delegation to Moldova, agreement on the methodology, scope and outline of the Evaluation report prior to the first mission;
- Desk review of documents;
- Interviews with project implementing partners, relevant government bodies, NGO, independent experts, beneficiaries and donor representatives;
- Conduct field visit to the project sites and interviews with local stakeholders;
- Elaborate summary key findings based on interviews and site visits performed;
- Debriefing with UNDP, EU Delegation to Moldova and project implementing partners;
- Development and submission of the draft Evaluation report. The draft will be shared with the UNDP and EU Delegation to Moldova for review and commenting;
- Finalize and submission of the final Evaluation report through incorporating suggestions received on the draft report.

The national consultant will be expected to conduct following tasks:

- Collection of background materials upon request by International Consultant;
- Provision of important inputs in developing methodology, work plan and Evaluation report outlines upon request by International Consultant;
- Assist to the International Consultant in desk review of materials;
- Assist the International Consultant in developing the mission agenda and establishing meeting with relevant stakeholders;
- Participation in debriefing with UNDP and EU Delegation to Moldova;
- Arranging field visits and assisting the International Consultant in interviewing local stakeholders at project sites, provision of interpretation in communication with beneficiaries when required;
- Assist the International Consultant in elaboration of a summary matrix of the project implementation key findings based on interviews and site visits performed;
- Participate in briefings with UNDP, EU Delegation to Moldova and project implementing partners;
- Assist the International Consultant in developing the first draft of the Evaluation report;
- Assist the International Consultant in finalization of the Final Evaluation Report through incorporating suggestions received.

The evaluation will be fully independent, and the evaluation team will retain enough flexibility to determine the best approach in collecting and analyzing data for the evaluation.

VII. EVALUATION'S ETHICS

Evaluations in UN agencies are conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) "Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation". The Evaluation team will take every measure to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of key information providers in the collection of data.

VIII. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The International and National Consultants must possess the following qualifications:

International Consultant:

- Master's degree or equivalent in Management, Development Studies, International Affairs and/or other relevant fields;
- At least 8 years of work experience in South Eastern European countries in the areas relevant to the assignment (agriculture and rural development, regional and local development, participatory planning for sustainable development, including participatory monitoring and evaluation);
- Experience in conducting evaluation of projects in the socio-economic field - at least 5 projects;
- Experience with development approaches in context of Eastern Partnership or EU Neighborhood countries;
- Experience within the country, including Gagauzia and Taraclia district will be a strong advantage;
- Previous work experience in related areas with UNDP or other development organization, preferably in the region
- Excellent spoken and writing skills in English. Knowledge of Romanian or Russian is an advantage.

National Consultant:

- University degree in Management, Development Studies and/or other relevant fields;
- At least 5 years of professional experience/technical knowledge in providing management or consultancy services in local development, participatory planning for sustainable development, including participatory monitoring and evaluation;
- Experience in conducting evaluation of projects in the socio-economic field – at least 3 projects;
- Work experience in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district, including in the development field
- Experience in managing, monitoring and evaluating projects for UN or other international development agencies in the region will be an asset;
- Fluent in English and Russian both written and spoken. Knowledge of Romanian is an advantage

IX. REFERENCE MATERIALS

The following documents should be studied by the evaluators:

1. UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results
2. Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.
3. United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Moldova (2018-2022)
4. Support to Agriculture and Rural Development for ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district (SARD) Programme Document (Description of Action) and relevant progress reports
5. Code of Conduct for Evaluation, the UNDP evaluation policy and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System

Background documentation is available on <http://www.md.undp.org>