

# Market Access for the Rural Poor Through Value Chain Promotion (MARP)

## Terms of References Strategic Reviews of MARP projects for International Consultant

### 1. Introduction

The Swiss Cooperation Office for Vietnam (SCO) is the representative of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). It is responsible for the coordination of Swiss Development Cooperation of the Swiss Government in Vietnam.

The Market Access for the Rural Poor through Value Chain Promotion Programme (MARP, 2013-2016) aims to reduce poverty in poor households, especially those of ethnic minorities, through generating additional income and employment in selected agricultural value chains in which the poor can participate. MARP focuses on two outcomes: i) *Increased market access and participation of poor rural households in selected agricultural value chains* and ii) *Knowledge and experience of value chain intervention generated and disseminated at local and national level, and in specific cases in the Mekong region*. Under the first outcome, MARP expects to increase income of at least 10,000 poor households, especially rural ethnic minorities and poor women, generate over 1,000 full-time jobs or equivalent and moves at least 3,000 households out of poverty. There are four projects to aim at improving eight agriculture value chains: Shan tea, rattan, bamboo, silk, hemp, cardamom, cinnamon, and star anise in 8 provinces in Vietnam - Nghe An, Lao Cai, Ha Giang, Lai Chau, Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa, Yen Bai, and Lang Son. The projects are as follows:

- Developing High Quality Tea (Shan Tea) Value Chains for Poverty Reduction for Ethnic Minorities in Northern Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation.
- Up-scaling of Pro-poor Rattan and Bamboo Value Chain Development for Women and Ethnic Minorities implemented by Oxfam Hong Kong.
- Improving Livelihoods of Ethnic Minority Women through Sustainable Development of the Ethnic Textile Value Chain implemented by the Vietnam Handicraft Exporters Association (VIETCRAFT) and Vietnam Rural Industries Research and Development Institute (VIRI).
- Leveraging the Spice Sector for Poverty Reduction amongst Ethnic Minority Communities in Vietnam implemented by SNV Netherlands Development Organization (SNV).

Under the second outcome, successful models and experiences that improve market access for the poor will be widely shared and exchanged at local and national level and in specific cases in the Mekong region. This is expected to contribute to a favourable policy environment for agricultural value chain development, and to trigger replication and expansion of successful models leading to additional income and employment generation.

At the half way point of MARP implementation, the performance of MARP projects in terms of achieving their outcomes and objectives vary across the portfolio. Sustaining the results is a common key challenge to all projects. A lot of the intervention emphasis is placed on the production side rather than developing and sustaining market linkages in downstream value chains, among other importance including strategic market development, business development services and business-enabling environment. In the programme advisory committee meeting, all MARP partners agreed and supported a need for a strategic review

for the projects, in order to significantly contribute to efficiently achieving the project results by mid-2016, and sustaining them afterwards.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the MTR is to review the full MARP portfolio, analyse the achievement up to now, against the log-frame and assess the strategies applied by projects under MARP. The MTR will identify priorities for projects and program to ensure maximum impacts and sustainability beyond 2016 and the way to achieve them.

The MTR therefore has the following specific objectives:

1. Review MARP **project current status**, assess **progress** against project implementation plans and log frames, assess effectiveness and efficiency of the portfolio.
2. Review the **strategies** applied by project including (i) the market development aspects (including market linkages) of each MARP project ; (ii) partnership and influencing strategy to related stakeholders (such as government authority, the private sector and civil society);
3. **Recommendations:** Provide clear recommendations for the remaining project duration to improve the project outcomes with regards to (i) accelerate market development; (ii) sustain the results beyond the MARP time frame

## 3. Scope and methodology

### 3.1. Scope

The review team will look at the achievement of the projects up to date, focusing on outputs and outcomes; assess current and future challenges, and propose strategies for implementation covering the remaining period of the project. The review should also assess the target beneficiaries of the projects and assess if the poor is appropriately engaged in the value chain.

To achieve the above objectives, the MTR should offer answers to the following key questions although not only restricted on them:

#### **Project current status**

- What are the projects' key outputs/results up-to date? How are they related to the project logframe?
- Is the project implementation effective and efficient? How efficient is the project management (accountability and cost effectiveness)? Is the project implementation sufficiently monitored and documented? Are problems identified in due time? Are practical, feasible solutions proposed and applied? Does the steering and decision-making process function appropriately?

What are key gaps between the project current status and the project designed outcomes?

#### **Strategies**

- Are the approaches applied by MARP projects appropriate to the local context and do they address context specific constraints within the chosen value chain?
- Have the MARP projects worked with partners and target groups that could deliver the impacts proposed? Do the projects take into account principles of participation

and inclusiveness (appropriate beneficiaries: poor households or near poor, ethnic groups, women)?

- Are there any significant changes in the context and market during the project implementation? If yes, have the MARP projects evolved to respond to the context and market changes during the implementation? If not, what are the measures the projects should take to adapt/adjust in the future?
- What are the key challenges and risks for the project remaining time and how to mitigate them, taking into account the market requirements and fluctuations?
- Is there a clear understanding of the market systems in which these projects operate within? If no how can a more market systems approach be adopted by these projects in the future?

**Sustainability and impacts:** assess the overall likely impact of the project and the likelihood of improving the market system to benefit the poor in each of the intervening value chains

- What are the main positive changes created by the MARP projects? Can the linkages facilitated by MARP projects be able to self-adapt to grow and strengthen in the long run? If not, what else the MARP projects should do during the remaining time of the projects?
- In the context of MARP value chains, taking into account the following challenges and characteristics: (i) private sector does not always have the needed capacity both financial and human resources (small size, upland, managed by ethnic minority, ect.); (ii) target poor, ethnic minorities living in very upland areas and (iii) for a number of products as handmade with difficulties in unifying and produce in large quantity, (iv) ongoing effort from MARP projects with intervention in the last years; what else the MARP projects could do to deliver wider market system changes and hence increase the possibilities for the results to sustain? And what are possible during the remaining time of the projects?

**Gender:** assess the roles, capacity of and benefit brought to female beneficiaries of MARP

- What is the impact on women's household workload due to the interventions implemented? Have they increased?
- Is there more unpaid work undertaken by women or has a market developed for their part time labour as a consequence of the interventions? If so what other activities have been displaced that women used to do prior to the intervention?
- How has women's status in the household changed as a result of the intervention, taking into consideration ethnic and social norms of the community that the project works with? Have women been able to have a greater voice in the decision making process, particularly in terms of economic decisions that affect the household?
- Have the interventions helped women to have greater access to services / training / information to advance economically?

**Recommendations:** recommendations should be feasible taking into account current context of MARP projects, resources availability and limited time remaining of the MARP.

- Which expected outcomes and results set out in the project document are achievable, given the current state of market development, the capacity of enterprises as well as producers engaged in all MARP value chains and the remaining time of the project? Which adjustments to the project and program logframes are necessary?
- What are the priorities of each MARP project in order to deliver those outcomes and results? And what would be the best strategy to address those priorities? Which adjustments are necessary in terms of project implementation arrangements at the project level as well as at the program level?
- Given the capacity of MARP project partners and resources available at the project level, what are the areas in each MARP project that need further technical assistance to ensure expected results will be achieved and these results will be sustainably? Provide concrete suggestion for each project under MARP with clear level (quality and quantity) of TA expected?
- Any other recommendations that contribute to the achievement of sustainable results for the program besides the concrete request listed above should also be brought up to SDC's attention.

#### **4. Methodology**

The review team will work in close collaboration with SDC and MARP project implementing agencies, SNV, Helvetas, Vietcraft, and Oxfam. The team will use literature review, discussions, interviews with related stakeholders besides above mentioned agencies - local partners, private sector, beneficiaries, relevant donors/NGOs, etc. The detailed methodology and process will be developed by the review mission, but with consideration of the following guidance:

1. The methodology will be developed based on the review of all important documents and literature sent to the MTR members by SDC and the MARP projects team in advance.
2. The methodology to be applied will be presented to SDC and MARP project partners in a kick-off meeting to ensure that the methodology is sensitive to the potential concerns of beneficiaries participating in this review.
3. Ensure that all analysis and recommendations are based on available records, evidence and interviews.
4. SDC, Helvetas, SNV, Vietcraft and Oxfam will support in organizing all meetings with related stakeholders.

#### **5. Team and qualifications**

The team will comprise one international consultant (team leader) and one national consultant.

The main responsibilities of the team leader are:

- Develop the methodology for the review based on providing a robust evidence-base, and where appropriate administering a short simple questionnaire, which will be tested and fine-tuned as appropriate.

- Provide overall strategic guidance and be responsible for the overall MTR process
- Allocate tasks to the team members
- Supervise and guide the team members in implementing their tasks and be responsible for the overall quality control of the report
- Coordinate with SDC; SNV, Helvetas, Vietcraft and Oxfam
- Write the MTR final report

The team leader should have the following experience:

- Experience of evaluating multi component private sector development programmes and experience of providing strategic guidance to programmes based on result-based evaluations;
- Considerable and proven experience in both implementing and evaluating value chains and in the implementation of making market works for the poor approach and methodology;
- Knowledge of a number of the commodity value chains in which MARP projects operate
- Considerable experience and knowledge of working within Vietnam on market systems approaches
- Experienced on project management and implementation
- Ideally knowledge of constraints faced by local enterprises in Vietnam.
- Experience of Agribusiness in Vietnam and the region would be a distinct advantage
  
- Very good communication skills
- Capable to work in a multi-cultural environment, especially with ethnic minority groups
- Fluent in English (writing, speaking), Vietnamese an advantage

The main responsibilities of the national consultant are:

- Fulfil tasks defined by and work under the supervision of the team leader
- Conduct interviews at the field level
- Liaise between MTR team and Provincial authorities, facilitate work of MTR team at field level
- Help the team leader in understanding the Vietnamese situation and context
- Interpret for the team leader in discussion with the Vietnamese partners
- Translate the evaluation report from English into Vietnamese

The national consultants should be:

- A specialist on evaluation of development programmes and an understanding of evidence based evaluations;
- Experience and deep knowledge on agriculture, market development and small agribusiness in Vietnam
- Experience in farmer groups, community based organisations and capacity development at the farm level
- Experienced on project management and implementation
- Fluent in English and Vietnamese (writing, speaking)
- Very good communication skills

## 6. Timeframe

To have an overview on the geographical areas of the 4 MARP projects and its value chains, table 1 is provided for the team to assess the overall time needed not only for working in the field but also for traveling time.

Project	Implementing agency	Value chain	Provinces
Developing High Quality Tea (Shan Tea) Value Chains for Poverty Reduction for Ethnic Minorities in Northern Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar	Helvetas	Shan tea	Lao Cai
			Ha Giang
			Lai Chau
Up-scaling of Pro-poor Rattan and Bamboo Value Chain Development for Women and Ethnic Minorities	Oxfam	Rattan	Nghe An
		Bamboo	Nghe An
Improving Livelihoods of Ethnic Minority Women through Sustainable Development of the Ethnic Textile Value Chain	VIETCRAFT and VIRI	Hemp	Hoa Binh
		Silk	Hoa Binh
			Thanh Hoa Nghe An
Leveraging the Spice Sector for Poverty Reduction amongst Ethnic Minority Communities in Vietnam implemented	SNV	Cardamom	Lao Cai
			Ha Giang
			Yen Bai
		Cinamon	Ha Giang
			Yen Bai
Star Anise	Lang Son		

From the size of the MARP program and its geographical coverage, at least full month being in Vietnam is expected. Depending on the actual situation on travel and working conditions (weekend, public holiday, ect.), the mission may last for 6 weeks. The MTR team is encouraged to propose a schedule they think most effective and efficient for such portfolio. Based on the number of partners in the field for MARP projects and travel conditions, tentative schedule is estimated as follows:

		Working days	Note
Hanoi + home base	Desk study + kick off meeting	4 days	
Ha Noi	Work with all partners	2 days	Lao Cai + Ha Giang: depending on the actual situation, MTR team may propose to drop one or spend less time in Ha Giang
Yen Bai	SNV and partners (cardamom + cinnamon)	2 days	
Lao Cai	SNV (cardamom), Helvetas (Shantea)	2 days + 1.5 days	
Lai Chau	Helvetas (shantea – Tam Duong)	1.5 days	
Ha Giang	Helvetas (Shantea)+ SNV (cardamom),	1 day + 2 days	
Hanoi	Internal discussion, wrap up, debriefing with SDC, SNV and Helvetas	2 days	
Hoa Binh	Work with hemp and silk project – Vietcraft	2 days including travel	
Hanoi			
Nghe An	OHK (rattan/bamboo) + Vietcraft (silk)	4 days	
Hanoi	Wrap up (prepare presentation – debriefing with SDC and partners)	2 days	

Home base	Writing and Finalising	10 days	
<b>Total</b>		<b>34 days</b>	

The total estimated time above is excluding travel time. It is estimated that, a total of maximum 5 days travel is needed for the mission within Vietnam. International consultant flying in will have two more travel days covered.

Note: Regarding writing time, total writing report and finalising for both international and national consultants are 10 days. However, as the final version should be translated into Vietnamese, the time allocation for national consultant involved in the writing will not be more than 4 days, revision should be carried out by the international consultant, while national consultant will be responsible for Vietnamese version.

## 7. Deliverables

- 1 debriefing meeting after the first field trip to the North (Shan tea and spices)
- Presentation of MTR findings and recommendations (after the field trip)
- A draft report in English submitted to SDC (within 2 weeks of leaving Hanoi)
- A final report in English and Vietnamese (max. 30 pages, excluding annexes) including executive summary (max 3 pages) with critical and analytical views and clear recommendations submitted to SDC.
- ***The MTR report should be concise and self-explanatory.*** The report structure should be agreed at the kick off meeting.

## 8. Reference Documents:

1. All Project Documents of MARP portfolio and MARP itself
2. Project and program annual plans and progress reports
3. Verification reports for all projects