
Terms of Reference for Mid-Term Evaluation

Project of “People Participation in improvement of forest governance and poverty alleviation in Vietnam (PFG - Vietnam)”

1. BACKGROUND

Started in 2014, the project “People Participation in improvement of forest governance and poverty alleviation in Vietnam” (PFG) is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA of Finland) and ActionAid Vietnam (AAV). It is carried out by AAV and its long-term partners in the districts of Thong Nong (Cao Bang Province), Krong Bong (Dak Lak Province), Duyen Hai (Tra Vinh Province) and Dong Hai (Bac Lieu Province).

The project’s overall aim is to alleviate poverty by protecting and utilizing forest resources effectively through accountable forest governance in Vietnam. Its specific purpose is to promote participation of grassroots communities and people in national forest management and information system as their rights to make forest governance accountable and contribute to poverty alleviation in Vietnam.

Democratic governance, women's rights, ethnic minority, climate change and poverty reduction are cross cutting themes in all designing, planning, implementing and monitoring project activities. At the end of the project, it is to reach 180,000 women and men who are from ethnic minorities, poor households and vulnerable groups in 4 provinces of Vietnam, who get improved control over forest resources through better access to information and institutions. A great proportion of funding and time is invested in capacity building and technical strengthening in relation to forest governance for the group. While an important component of the project is to get this group trained and enable them to use digital tools on highly affordable mobile phones to:

- a. Regularly update the data on timber and non-timber forest products availability and local use into FORMIS;
- b. use data that are available on FORMIS to develop community based forest management (CBFM) plans and integrate them into local socio-economic development plans (SEDP);
- c. Effectively monitor the use and allocation of forest land and resources, so that forest governance will be more transparent.

On the other hand, the project involves a wide range of stakeholders who have different interests and will contribute to the project implementation with skills and resources. As it has been operated in other AAV's projects, whose direct implementers are primarily Support Programme for Development (SPD) in 4 Locations and district and communal People’s Committee. The indirect implementers include local Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development, Departments of Forestry, Agro-forestry Extensions, Forest Rangers, and local learning centers. Being engaged in project implementation, their coordination and management capability are strengthened while their roles in forest governance are promoted within the country.

Secondary stakeholders include Community Based Organizations, national and international NGOs, private sectors, media and national research institutes. Being involved in certain project activities and being shared with project findings, these groups gained an access to forestry management data

and information collected by the project. Other joint activities and collaboration as well benefit this group with updated and advanced knowledge on agro-forestry.

On March 9, 2015, the project was officially launched in a national Inception Workshop. This event effectively spread project's visions and messages among government partners, international and national organizations, CSOs, and media agencies. The inception phase was completed with Memorandum signed and baseline survey in all project locations finished, shaping project's priorities for activities and approaches.

As per the project document, a mid term evaluation was foreseen at the middle of the second year, taking place in September 2016. The Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) will assess project progress against stated outputs, as well as identify issues and recommend course corrections. It will also highlight issues and challenges affecting effective and efficient implementation of outputs and their contribution to project outcomes and impact. The evaluation will pave the way to improve project delivery for the remaining project duration and propose amendments (if any) required in project design and implementation arrangements in order to effectively and sustainably contribute to the livelihood improvement in the targeted areas.

An evaluation as such will be conducted by a single external independent consultant unit who meets all requirements and capable of delivering following results as set out below.

2. GENERAL APPROACH

This MTE will apply a participatory approach, which allows all relevant stakeholders and communities to be engaged in the process. This is to ensure the MTE reflexes fully the opinions of various partners involved in the project implementation. Additionally, national and local evaluation plans, activities and policies will be thoroughly studied as the background and orientation for the evaluation. The MTE will also make use of the existing evaluation capacity of all partners, and maximize the positive effects of the process on evaluation capacity of all partners to better evaluate the achievements of the expected results and assess risks and challenges to the project implementation.

Data/analysis for the MTE report will be based on the facts and figures quoted from the related documents, as well as the validation in the field visit.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

- (a) Review the intended and unintended results of the project progress to targeted beneficiaries (especially ethnic minorities) till date in linkage with the expected results of FORMIS
- (b) Evaluate the progress made against the project expected results and impacts to provide suggestions to project implementation in the remaining time.

4. ISSUES TO BE STUDIED

As demonstrated in the project document, PFG was designed to assist FORMIS at the local level. The FORMIS platform so far is only suitable for applying at national and district level where staff have relevant knowledge on forestry, expertise on Geographic Information System (GIS), however at the local level, especially community level, the platform has shown its limitation in engaging the community in forest governance as it is complicated for community user. Therefore, it is necessary for PFG to conduct its activities to enable community people to access to FORMIS's data, to update the forest changes, and to propose necessary corrections if needed.

The following questions are minimum requirements for this assignment. MTE team is expected to identify and address other relevant issues which help provide the orientations for PFG to move forward in order to achieve its objectives.

Relevance

- How relevantly is PFG designed to assist the implementation of FORMIS?
 - The way PFG has been able to use the FORMIS resources to plan and implement with/in the communities?
 - How has PFG contributed to enrich communities with the knowledge of forestry through the database of FORMIS?
 - How does PFG plan to achieve its purposes in the future and what are the additional activities recommended for PFG to strengthen its role in promoting the FORMIS's database to communities?
- How does the project complement and provide synergy with FORMIS project and other national and local programs in Vietnam forest and rural development sectors, or in public access to information?

Efficiency

- In what way the overall design of the project contributed to accomplish the planned results efficiently, especially in promoting the access of local people to FORMIS?
- How does the functioning of the institutional arrangements, including cooperation and communication between two projects affect the implementation/progress of PFG?

Impact

- How has PFG promoted community participation and empowerment of grassroots level in community-based forest governance? Have communities been able to give their feedback/communicate their needs related to FORMIS to the local authorities?

Sustainability

- What better design and approach could be considered to further make use of FORMIS at grassroots level? Any changes/revisions the project should make to strengthen this connection?
- The suitability of the livelihood models selected in the project from social, economic and environmental impact points or view? Any recommendations to make sure these can be implemented in the remaining time frame? Any extension of the project needed?
- What are recommendations for an exit strategy and phase-out plan for PFG to ensure sustainability?

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

As defined by MFA, evaluator(s) should examine the success of the programme in relation to all cross-cutting objectives including promotion of gender and social equality, human rights, rights to information, and equal participation opportunities of marginalized groups, including children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities as a development challenge, environment, climate and disaster risks.

There should be particular emphasis on gender, environment, social inclusion and the right to information.

6. METHODOLOGY

The MTE Team will present their proposal on methodology as an integral part of these ToR. The MTE team is free to propose any evaluation methodology that is pertinent in its proposal. It should also explain how it will use various methods and triangulate findings from their application. If selected, the methodology proposed will be discussed and agreed with the AAV before being implemented. Main phases in the MTE are proposed as below.

a) Preparatory - inception phase

This phase include desk study on key PFG project documents, FORMIS related project documents including MTE report to gain a good understand of the link between two projects. The evaluation team will then prepare a detailed field plan as well as all necessary forms and evaluation tools. The MTE team is to work closely with the Embassy and the project team. Before the field mission, the evaluation team will submit a brief Inception Report indicating:

- i. Chosen locations for the MTE and detailed field plan
- ii. Detailed description of approach and methodologies (with clear description of information collection tools and aims)
- iii. Data/information analysis and recording system which ensures that all data is disaggregated by gender, age group and other relevant categories
- iv. Detailed reporting plan
- v. Initial findings of the desk study.

The Report is to be initially reviewed by AAV and the project team, and finally approved by the Embassy. The inception phase will include meeting(s) with the Embassy and PFG project team. Once the inception report and the proposed MTE approach are approved, the MTE team will begin to conduct interviews and field works.

b) Interview in AAV's Headquarter and related stakeholders

The review team will conduct interviews/meeting with project team in AAV's Headquarter, and with FORMIS project team to better understand the collaboration/cooperation between the two projects, the background of PFG, its progress as well as management / implementation issues.

Additional interviews may be expected with the Embassy staff in charge of supervising PFG, as well as other donors's initiatives on forest governance and VNFOREST.

c) Field work

The review team takes charge of travelling to the field and conduct at least:

- i. Field observation
- ii. Key informant interviews with project's local partners and stakeholders (such as Forest Rangers or officers of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development)
- iii. Focus Groups Discussion with direct beneficiaries (including CCGs, Project Management Boards, and other beneficiaries).

To ensure the quality of the evaluation, other necessary information collection tools or activities should also be proposed by the MTE team in its proposal for AAV's consideration. This will contribute to demonstrating how well the MTE team understands the assignment. The evaluation team holds the responsibility to regularly contact with project team and the Embassy to ensure quality of the evaluation process.

d) Final reporting and debriefing

- The team will submit the draft report within five (5) working days upon from completion of the field work.
- On the basis of comments made on the draft, the team will finalize the report. Final report is to be submitted after five (5) working days after receiving the comments on the draft report.
- The team is to participate in a debrief meeting with the Embassy and AAV to present and reflect on final findings and suggestions.

The MTE is proposed to be conducted in maximum 15 days, including time for inception, desk study, field work, and reporting. The MTE is proposed to be conducted in at least 1 project district.

7. WORK PLAN AND TIME SCHEDULE

Activity	Expected outcome	Number of possible working days
Preparatory (document study)	Inception report with details on chosen location, field plan, approach and methodologies, data/information analysis and recording system, reporting plan, and initial findings	2
Interview in AAV's Headquarter	Initial findings on project efficiency a national level	1
Field work	All necessary information collected to compile first draft MTE report	9
Final reporting and debriefing	Final report with clear findings and recommendations to support project development and implementation in its remaining time.	3

8. EXPERTISE REQUIRED

The MTE team will be formed with a Team Leader and Team Member(s).

Team Leader

- Master's degree in forestry development and governance, environmental management, climate change, community development, or in any other areas relevant to this assignment.
- At least 10 years of practical experience in monitoring and evaluation of programs and development project
- Having profound knowledge and experience in forest management/use of forestry databases/use of GIS
- Demonstrated experience in leading similar evaluations and reviews

Team member (s)

- Masters/Bachelor Degree in forestry development and governance, environmental management, climate change, community development, or in any other areas relevant to this assignment.
- At least 5 years of practical experience in monitoring and evaluation of programs and development projects
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in forest management/use of forestry database/use of GIS

9. REPORTING

The MTE team is expected to produce:

- A brief inception report, which should be prepared following the desk work and before the field mission
- Final MTE report
- Presentation of findings and recommendations

All of the above is to be reviewed and approved by the MFA. The anticipated length of the report should not exceed 20 pages (plus annexes) with clear findings and conclusions, as well as recommendations and documentation of lessons learned.

The final MTE report will be delivered in English and Vietnamese language in electronic format to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland with copy to the project team. The final report is to be submitted for approval within five (5) working days after receiving the comments on the draft report. A debrief meeting is to be held with the Embassy to present and reflect on final findings and suggestions. The date for such meeting will be confirmed by the Embassy to the review team and project team.

10. TENTATIVE BUDGET

The approximate budget for the task is VND150,000,000 (~EUR 5,900) including consultancy fees and reimbursable costs.

Consultancy fee is negotiable basing on experience and expertise, within the allocated budget.

11. MANDATE

The selected consultant is expected and entitled to discuss with relevant parties, government authorities, local authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and individuals relevant to the assignment.

The consultant is not, however, authorized to make any commitments on behalf of the Governments of Vietnam and Finland or represent him or herself as representative of the Governments of Finland or Vietnam. Similarly the consultant cannot make any commitment on behalf of AAV.

The consultant shall share this TOR and/or the letter of introduction of the assignment with the stakeholders they work with.

12. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

The proposal must incorporate at least the following information: (a) Understanding of the TOR; (b) Approach/tools; (c) Firm experience; (d) Consultancy team; (e) Detailed Work plan; and (f) Detailed financial proposal (Consultancy fee should be quoted in VND)

A proposal including technical and financial bid written in English should be submitted to ActionAid Vietnam by 17:00 pm Hanoi time (GMT+7) on 15th October 2016.

All proposals should be sent in soft copies, with legitimate supporting documents fully signed and scanned to email address: congvan.aav@actionaid.org with clearly written subject: *Proposals for PFG Vietnam - Mid-Term Evaluation Mission*. The selected Consultant will submit the original proposal in hard copies to AAV at the signing of the contract. The submitted Proposal in hard copy will be an integral part of the signed contract.

Inquiries from interested candidates need to be sent through the abovementioned email address: congvan.aav@actionaid.org before 17:00 pm on 10th October 2016 Hanoi time (GMT+7).

Annexes of the TOR:

- (i) Finland MFA evaluation manual:
<http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=288455&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>
- (ii) Evaluation report quality checklist (OECD/DAC and EU standards):
<http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>
- (iii) Project Document
- (iv) Project work plan
- (v) Project reports (baseline, monitoring, survey of community agreements in forestry, survey of livelihoods models)