**Terms of Reference**

**External review and impact evaluation of the Alliances Caucasus Programme**

Mandate duration: December-January, 2021

Tbilisi

November, 2021

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# Introduction

The document sets out the terms of reference (ToR) for the external review and impact evaluation (hereinafter evaluation) of the Alliances Caucasus Project (ALCP). The document describes the purpose, scope, context and objectives of the evaluation. It provides guidance towards the evaluation process and the expected deliverables. The ToR will be an integral part of the contract for this evaluation mandate.

# Background and context information

Georgia has faced challenges of uneven growth and productivity across economic sectors. Around 41% of the country’s population resides in rural areas, where the agricultural sector is the major employer, accounting for more than 40% of the labor force. Nevertheless, over the decades, the sector’s contribution to GDP has remained below 10% and constituted only 7.4% of the pre-pandemic GDP (Y2019).

Since the early years of the post-soviet transition, agricultural value chains have featured fragmentation, a lack of access to inputs and markets. The pattern has been pertinent especially in the livestock sector, which constitutes more than 50% of the agricultural GDP and where over 90% of the output is produced in subsistence and semi-subsistence smallholdings.

Against this background, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has supported the implementation of the Alliances Caucasus Project, which started in 2008 and has been running in various forms to the present days.

In the initial phase in Alliances Project in Samstkhe Javakheti (Alliances SJ), the project was limited to the dairy and meat sectors and their supporting functions and rules including, breeding, feeding, veterinary inputs, information, food safety and hygiene and traditional disaster risk reduction. Alliances Kvemo Kartli (Alliances KK) expanded into the sheep value chain, both wool and meat from 2011. This was based on considerations of the importance of sheep to the Azeri community, the majority of whom reside in Kvemo Kartli and the presence of a significant portion of the Animal Movement Route on which over a million head of livestock travel twice a year from winter to summer pastures and back twice a year. In 2014 the program expanded into Ajara, which together with Kvemo Kartli and Samstkhe Javakheti formed the Alliances Lesser Caucasus Program. The honey market system and rural tourism were added to the project focus.

The target groups of the project always have been represented by small scale primary livestock producers and the players of the related market systems. It has been a Market Systems Development (MSD) project aimed at utilizing entry points with market players to overcome market constraints and catalyze wider change for the rural small-holder producers and agro-food processors. It is based on identifying and designing interventions to impact a carefully defined target group, the approach which relies on meticulous ongoing market intelligence and rigorous operational processes and application of the verifiable results measurement system based on the DCED[[1]](#footnote-1) standards. The project implements inherently sustainable interventions, which shall not replace or replicate the functions of existing market players, thus pursuing the exit strategy of leaving behind the market system, which is functional without external support.

A major change in the project environment was the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (AA) signed in 2014. It has played a major role for the rules of the livestock market system including: food safety and hygiene regulation of food producing enterprises, access to EU markets, veterinary regulation, health and safety and environmental regulation. From 2014, the ALCP programming and operations were fully harmonized with the changed framework conditions. The project has achieved substantial scale and systemic change well beyond the initially designated project areas and targets and devoted itself to learning, excellence and participation in a global community of practice in Market Systems Development (MSD). The project operates the monitoring system, which fully complies with the DCED[[2]](#footnote-2) Standard for Results Measurement, which checks against the systemic set, monitoring and measurement of indicators, validating the results of the development interventions.

The current phase of ALCP started in 2017 with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) started to support ALCP since 2020. The project is targeting cross-border objectives with Armenia and Azerbaijan by promoting trade with inputs and sharing the best practices for conducive market environment. Besides, the project seeks for utilizing modern technologies and market opportunities, including bio organic certification and access to global export markets for the benefit of rural producers and rural SMEs. ALCP is set to come to an end on April 30, 2022.

# Objectives, scope and focus of the Evaluation

**Objectives**

The current phase of the ALCP project has facilitated interventions in the livestock meat, dairy, honey and wool market systems to safeguard the sustainable growth by ensuring access for SMEs, livestock and honey producers to cross-border and other export markets. The project targeted 40,000 livestock and honey producers in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, generating tangible positive income changes to a value of 11.5 million GEL direct and 2 million GEL indirect, due to improved services and markets and productivity increases of 10%. The target for net attributable income for employees, business and SME financing is 13.5 million GEL.

The project interventions were structured around three distinct outcomes:

* Outcome 1: Livestock and Honey Producers in Georgia strengthen their position in the market system and increase their income thanks to reliable market access to diversified opportunities from sustainable SME’s in the meat, dairy, honey and wool sectors.
* Outcome 2: Livestock and honey producers increase profitability thanks to stronger regional linkages and cross-border availability of inputs and business
* Outcome 3: Growing cross-border trade and export opportunities both within the South Caucasus and the larger region offers more diversified market access and terms of trade to livestock and honey producers

The **overall goal** of the independent external evaluation is to validate the results achieved by the project and look beyond the project timeframe identifying longer-term effects of the conducted interventions.

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

1. To assess and validate the results of the project, with a view of cost-efficiency and results sustainability;
2. To consolidate lessons learnt on which recommendations may be developed for a new market system development project.

**Scope**

The scope of the assignment is an external evaluation, which will assess the current phase of the project, which has the timeframe from April 2017 through April 2022.

The geographical scope encompasses the project outreach areas within Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. With respect to the former, the ALCP project results have to be reviewed along with another Swiss funded MSD project implemented by the Strategic Development Agency (SDA) in Armenia. For this purpose, a desk study has to be undertaken combined with the online communication with the project implementing partner (SDA) and the Swiss Cooperation Office in Armenia. The consultant will be provided with the reference materials and internal data verified through an independent DCED Standard audit complemented by the Independent Evaluation of SDC’s Performance in Market Systems Development in Agriculture 2013-2019. The consultant should also refer to other external evaluations conducted during the project phase, including the ILO’s study “Better Cheese Better Work: The ALCP’s Impact on Informality and Working Conditions in Georgia’s Dairy Sector” (2020). It will also include the recently conducted intervention impact assessments for this phase, which have been designed and overseen by an external DCED consultant backstopped to the ALCP. DCED audit provides assurance regarding monitoring processes and includes analysis of the way in which impact is attributed to the programme. Besides, the latest references on the ALCP project results have been included in the BEAM exchange evidence review of the results achieved by projects using the market systems development (MSD) approach.

**Evaluation methodology**

The evaluation will include desk review of the project related materials and evaluation reports produced during the implementation of the current phase. Besides, online interviews and field mission(s) will be undertaken to selected project stakeholders. The consultant will be expected to conduct analysis of the results per the intervention logic (log-frame) and assess the extent to which objectives have been achieved.

**Evaluation criteria**

The evaluation has been structured around the standard DAC criteria[[3]](#footnote-3): **coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability**. The breadth and depths of the evaluation have to be informed by the evaluation questions (see below) developed under the standard DAC criteria. The questions are only indicative and have to be further elaborated by a selected consultant.

**Coherence** measures the extent to which the project was in coherence with the other development initiatives. The indicative questions:

* To what extent was ALCP aligned with other related initiatives funded by Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC&SECO)?
* To what extent was the project aligned with other existing systems and platforms to achieve synergy?

**Relevance** seeks to evaluate the extent to which a program is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient country and donor. The indicative questions:

* + To what extent the interventions responded to the needs and priorities of the government of Georgia at the national and local level?
  + To what extent is the intervention responding to the needs and priorities of the farmers, products buyers/processors and other market operators (input suppliers, service providers etc.)?

**Effectiveness** measure the extent to which a program attains its objectives. The indicative questions:

* To what extent the implementation of the Project resulted in achieving the Outcomes of the project and the associated outputs?
* To what extent have the chosen strategies related to capacity building have been effective?
* To what extent did the national and local authorities become responsive to the project initiatives? Did the project achieve institutionalization of the systemic changes?

**Efficiency** measures the results – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. Indicative question:

* What have been the monetary and qualitative benefits generated by the project?
* Has the project applied cost-efficient and cost-effective ways for achieving the results?

**Impact** measures positive and negative changes produced by the project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Indicative question:

* What are the intended and unintended effects of the program, including the effects on the beneficiaries and others?

**Sustainability** considers whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn (systemic changes underpinned with behavioral changes of market players).

* To what extent will effects be maintained when the SDC’s support has come to an end?

The indicative questions for the evaluation shall be grouped according to the standard criteria and structured around the following intervention lines:

* Productivity and Income increase for target groups
* Improvements in quality, standards and food safety requirements introduced and enhanced
* Improvements in market access, including cross border trade and export, for targeted groups, producers and entrepreneurs, including women and youth;
* Improvements in access to public goods and services adapted to local needs, including for women and youth;

# Crosscutting aspects to be considered in the evaluation of the intervention lines:

* Gender: Did the projects take into account existing inequalities between men/women, their causes and factors of influence? Have strategies been adopted in order to reduce these inequalities? How did the projects take into account the specific needs and strategic interests of men and women? In what measure was the participation of men/women instigated?
* Governance: to what extent the project facilitated central and local governments’ responsiveness to the need of smallholder farmers, private sector actors and population in terms of providing opportunities for their income increase and employment?
* Environment: How far the Environmental aspects were considered during the implementation?
* Changed environment due to COVID 19 pandemic

**Indicative questions to be considered in the elaboration of recommendations**

Building on the achievements and lessons learnt within ALCP, the consultant is expected to draw recommendations about the following:

* What are the lines of intervention that could continue for a follow up MSD project that will focus on support of development of local agricultural value chains?
* What are the areas of policy dialogue and at which level could the project be involved in the follow up project?
* What aspects need to be considered to enhance inclusiveness in economic development and related local decision making, with the view of a new LNOB guidance adopted by SDC?
* Which resilience aspects among beneficiaries can the project build on and what is the recommended strategy to further enhance the achievements?
* Was an efficient use of natural resources promoted with the view of sustainable human to nature interface and changing climate conditions?
* To what extent did COVID 19 pandemic, as a contextual factor, cause changes in needs and priorities of the market players? Did it affect the results of the project? Was the project response adequate?

# Roles and responsibilities of the consultant(s)

The evaluation is to be conducted by one or more consultants, who, as a part of the technical proposal, are requested to provide an evaluation plan with a detailed description of the proposed methodology to answer the evaluation questions, as well data collection procedures. The plan should also indicate the detailed schedule for the tasks to be undergone, the activities to be implemented and the deliverables. If teamed, the consultants have to decide on distribution of roles during the evaluation process.

The consultant will report directly to the SDC, represented by the Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus in Tbilisi.

SDC may second a focal point from SDC employment and income network, which will work with a selected consultant to facilitate information exchange and learning in course of the evaluation.

To obtain reference materials for the evaluation exercise, the consultant will be supported by the project implementing team. A contact with the Swiss Cooperation Office in Armenia will be facilitated by SDC.

At the beginning of the mandate, the consultant will have a briefing with the SCO team. After the field mission and the desk review of reference documents, the consultant is expected to prepare a short presentation on preliminary findings of the evaluation exercise.

The draft evaluation report shall be written in English and be submitted to SCO after the field mission. The report shall be no more than 20 pages (without annexes). A feedback from SCO team will be provided to finalize the evaluation reports. The final version incorporating the comments shall be made available to SCO, also in electronic form, not later than 5 working days after receiving the comments from SCO.

# Evaluation process and timeframe

The following indicative timeframe of maximum 30days is proposed to cover:

* Preparatory works -6 days;
* Briefings at the Swiss Embassy -2 days, including briefing and de-briefing meetings;
* Field mission to the project areas -5 days;
* Drafting report, including finalization - 15 days).
* International travel (if any) - 2 days.

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| Activity | Date | Responsibilities |
| Announcement of the evaluation and publication of the ToR | November 24 | SCO |
| Submission of technical and financial proposal | December1 | Consultant |
| Selection of evaluation consultant and announcement of the decision | December 3 | SCO |
| Contracting a consultant | December 7, 2021 | SCO, Consultants |
| Briefing at SCO, discussion on technical proposal and inception Report with the elaborated evaluation questions and outline of the evaluation report. | December 10, 2021 | SCO, Consultant |
| Field mission | January 10-14, 2022 |  |
| Debriefing and presentation of the preliminary findings; | January 17, 2022 | Consultants |
| **Draft Evaluation Report** | January 21, 2022 | Consultants |
| Feedback on the Draft Evaluation Report by SDC | January 26, 2022 | SCO |
| **Final Evaluation Report** | January 31, 2022 | Consultants |

# Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected to be submitted by the consultant (s):

* Technical proposal on evaluation with the elaborated evaluation questions according to DAC criteria
* Inception Report including outline of the evaluation report.
* PPT presentation and debriefing meeting to discuss first findings;
* Draft Evaluation Report;
* Final Evaluation Report;
* Activity and Financial report of the mandate

# Reference Documents

The ALCP project team will provide a selected consultant with the reference documents (Project document, reviews, studies, etc.) in electronic format within a week upon signing of the contract. A large proportion of the project related materials are available at <http://www.alcp.ge/index.php?cat=6> . Any other documents will be made available upon request and/or during the mission. Documents will include at the minimum:

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* Project Document for the phase;
* Operational Plans;
* Bi-annual and annual reports;
* Ongoing surveys /market research conducted and market resources developed and published during the current phase of ALCP project.
* Impact assessment reports for the current phase

# Competency profile of the consultant

The following competences and experience are required:

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| --- | --- |
| **Background:** | Academic degree in Economics, Development Economics or related fields |
| **Professional experience:** | * Prior experience in design and/or evaluation of MSD projects; * Practical, thematic and methodological experience in development cooperation and local (rural) economic development |
| **Thematic competences:** | * Inclusive agricultural value chain development as well as their up- and downstream linkages and support functions * Agricultural market system development (MSD) benefiting the poor in remote rural areas in thin markets * National/regional contexts and agriculture/agribusiness related policies, rules and standards; * Gender sensitive, social inclusion, and LNOB sensitive program management |
| **Methodological competences:** | * Experience with evaluation of large scale donor supported programs (similar assignments); * Result chain based intervention logic and the M&E thereof; * Proven ability to facilitate focus group discussions and interviews with project stakeholders and beneficiaries; * Excellent analytical, writing and presentation skills. |
| **Language competences:** | * English language skills (spoken and written); knowledge of Georgian will be of advantage. |
| **Ethical and social competencies** | * Independence, Integrity, Impartiality * Team spirit, professional responsibility |
| **Geographic competences** | * Experience with South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, Balkan, and/or Former CIS countries are desirable |

# Reporting

The consultant(s) shall report to the SCO Tbilisi for the entire duration of the assignment.

# Application procedure

Technical and financial offers have to be submitted to the Swiss Cooperation Office in Tbilisi to [beka.tagauri@eda.admin.ch](mailto:beka.tagauri@eda.admin.ch) with cc to [Teimuraz.khomeriki@eda.admin.ch](mailto:Teimuraz.khomeriki@eda.admin.ch); Deadline for the application is December 1, 2021.

The technical proposal should not exceed 5 pages and should outline the service provider’s:

1. Approach to and methodology for the assignment;
2. Experience with similar assignments (incl. CVs);
3. Draft evaluation work plan;
4. Draft report outline;
5. Financial proposals

The financial proposal should be no more than one page and should clearly outline the daily rates in Swiss Francs (CHF).

1. The project results measurement system has been audited twice by the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED): (a) Alliances SJ and KK in 2014; and (b) ALCP (AJ) in 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development](https://www.enterprise-development.org/about-the-dced/) (DCED) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. OECD Evaluation Criteria: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-3)