

## Terms of Reference

### Strengthening Rights to Land in Pek District - Xiengkhouang Project Final Evaluation

Project Number: N-LAO-2020-0018

#### 1. Introduction

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Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) was formed when representatives of various Mennonite church conferences in the United States met on July 27-28, 1920, in Indiana, U.S., and pledged to aid hungry people, including Mennonites, in Russia and Ukraine. It is a Christian faith-based international NGO that has existed for 100 years and currently works in all sectors of development, disaster response, and peacebuilding in 51 countries around the world. In partnership with local churches and organizations, MCC has established long-term positive relationships with hundreds of local partner organisations.

MCC has worked in Laos since 1975. For the first 15 years, it was one of few international non-government organizations (INGOs) in the country. Its work has ranged from post-war recovery, education, public health, agriculture and irrigation, nutrition, business development, justice, and human rights. Most recently this has also included supporting land rights by providing training on land law to small land holders and village leaders.

Rural populations in Laos, particularly ethnic minority villagers, are vulnerable to land loss and negative livelihood impacts from investment projects, forced concessions, and leases. To address this critical issue, MCC's project – *Strengthening Rights to Land in Pek District* – focuses interventions on two key components: dissemination and understanding of laws related to land, and an enhanced grassroots justice system.

Village Mediation Committees (VMC) comprise this first level of the justice system in Laos and are often the only recourse many villagers have, to seek justice and resolve any conflicts or disputes. It therefore important that VMC members are empowered with mediation and conflict resolution skills, that promote just outcomes where both parties feel heard, and their rights are protected. As such, the project aims to uphold and protect the legitimate rights to land and interests of all conflicting parties, especially ordinary villagers, while strengthening the rule of law and improving the dispute resolution systems in place to protect these rights, particularly for poor and ethnic minority groups.

To achieve this the project provides training and support to staff of 28 government offices and mass organisations, as well as the VMCs, village leaders, and villagers of 60 villages across seven clusters in Pek district, Xiengkhouang. Through these activities the project drives improvement in the overall project goal and two objectives:

Goal: Justice in the use of land and natural resources in Lao PDR is improved

Objective 1: Villagers are able to secure their livelihood through protecting their legitimate rights to land.

Objective 2: Legitimate rights and interest of all parties are respected in conflict resolution.

This project is funded through the generosity and support of Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) and Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC), the donors. Total funding amounts to 1.2 million Euro over a three-year period from March 2020 to February 2023. In addition to MCC and the donors, other relevant stakeholders for this project include its Government partners, especially its main partner the District Office of Agriculture and Forestry.

## **2. Cause and objective of the evaluation**

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As part of the cooperation agreement between MCC and Bread for the World, a project evaluation is required during the last year of the project. The evaluation will focus on the assessment of the implemented activities (in accordance with the agreement between the donors and MCC) and whether the activities led to the achievement of the planned results as well as to the project objectives. This will be the first and final external evaluation of this project. As a result of this evaluation, recommendations from the evaluator/s are expected in order to improve the quality of future projects.

The project is in its third and final year of implementation, with about nine months remaining. A second phase of this project has been discussed with Bread for the World and this evaluation will also provide key learning from the project and guide the planning for any future phase.

Lastly, the evaluation will also be used by the main government partner to aid them in making evidence-based decisions in their future policy and planning development.

## **3. Key questions**

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It is expected that the evaluation report will entail a comprehensive analysis of the project from its inception in March 2020 to present, taking into account its performance and effects as well as its beneficiaries, partners, stakeholders, and the relationships between them.

Cross-cutting issues such as gender and ethnic equality, and inclusion of persons with a disability, shall be considered in all the questions [where applicable].

The key questions of this evaluation - based on the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria - are:

### Relevance

- To what extent was the project suited to the particular needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries?
- To what extent were the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?
- To what extent have stakeholders been actively and meaningfully involved in project design, implementation, re-design and monitoring?

### Effectiveness

- To what extent were the objectives achieved / are likely to be achieved?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives? Reflection on various factors: internal and external, operational and programmatic, components of the project etc.
- Were there any non-intended effects? If so, why?

### Efficiency

- Was the MCC set-up on the ground appropriate to support the project and the partners?
- To what extent were the project's resources efficiently used for project activities (e.g., Were activities cost-efficient? Were objectives achieved on time? Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?)

### Impact

- What real difference/changes has the project made to the lives of the target groups?

- How do the partners and beneficiaries see the impact themselves and how do they describe the changes?
- To what extent has the project contributed through its interventions to the wider community (i.e. indirect beneficiaries)?

#### Sustainability

- To what extent can the benefits of the project continue after it is finished?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the sustainability of the project?

Additionally, the effectiveness of the project's Monitoring and Evaluation processes, procedures, measures, and system should be assessed during the evaluation.

#### **4. Evaluation design/methods**

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The evaluation should be undertaken using the OECD-DAC standards and should be impartial, credible, precise, and ultimately result in a report which can be presented to Bread for the World in compliance with donor regulations. While there are no limitations on the format of the report, it will need to meet the needs of all key stakeholders for the report and should be discussed with MCC.

The evaluation methodology should be participatory, inclusive, sensitive to cultural difference, and ethical in data collection practices. Evaluators are encouraged to use participatory and qualitative methods for data collection and data analysis, along with quantitative methods for measuring the changes, in line with the overall goals, objectives, and indicators of the project. The evaluator will be provided with secondary sources (biannual donor reporting, financial audits reports, baseline and midline data, etc), as well as project documentation (project proposal, cooperation agreement, etc.). At the same time, the evaluator shall consider other external secondary data sources when / if necessary. The primary sources of data will include MCC staff and partners, as well as direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project.

#### **5. Process of the evaluation/time frame**

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Evaluation will be managed by Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Coordinator within the Vientiane, Laos office. However, it will be implemented in close cooperation with the project team in Xiengkhouang. The evaluation team is also expected to liaise with project's Government partners.

<b>What</b>	<b>By when</b>
Documentation review, desk research & initial consultations	-
<b>Inception report, including detailed methodology and tools</b>	<b>Aug 5, 2022</b>
<b>Data collection</b>	<b>Aug 12, 2022</b>
Data management & analysis	-
<b>First draft report of evaluation</b>	<b>Aug 24, 2022</b>
<b>Review/feedback from MCC of first draft report</b>	<b>Aug 26, 2022</b>
<b>Final evaluation report</b>	<b>Sep 2, 2022</b>

## 6. Expected products

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- 1) Inception report, including:
  - a. A detailed methodology;
  - b. Tools: Objectives and key questions, Methodology, Data collection methods and detailed tools actor by actor, sampling considerations if any, timeline, etc; and
  - c. Data collection plan, including the logistical arrangements.
- 2) Evaluation Final Report, not more than 25 pages (excluding annexes), written in simple English. It will consist of:
  - a. Executive Summary.
  - b. Methodology, including limitations.
  - c. Main Findings, disaggregated by age, gender, ethnicity. Reflecting on key areas of the evaluation as mentioned above.
  - d. Conclusions and Recommendations.Any additional information should be provided in Annexes.

## 7. Key qualifications of the evaluators

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### Required Qualifications:

- Currently reside in Laos OR can independently and easily gain access and authority to work in Laos.
- Master or higher degree in Law and/or evaluation.
- Background and experience in legal sector and/or mediation.
- Prior work experience conducting evaluations of projects, including working with the OECD-DAC criteria.
- Training or significant experience with research methodologies. Strong competence in qualitative data collection, synthesis, analysis, and presentation. Quantitative data collection tool design, summary, interpretation, and presentation of numerical data.
- Understanding of Lao policies and strategies related to land rights, access to justice, and/or grassroots justice.
- Excellent English communication and writing skills.

### Desired Qualifications:

- Previous experience working alongside Lao Government partners in implementing development activities and/or evaluation activities.
- Prior work experience in legal education, conflict mediation, or justice system development.
- Background in land rights advocacy, law, legal education, community development, human rights, and/or conflict mediation/resolution.
- Ability to speak pasa Lao.

## 8. Content of the evaluator's offer

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Interested evaluators should submit an offer that includes:

- Cover letter outlining the approach, roles, and responsibilities of all individuals;
- CVs of all evaluators;
- Evaluation Proposal, which includes the methods that will be used, a proposed timeline, and sample reports;

- Financial Proposal, which outlines the suggested costs, including all ancillary costs that may be incurred during the evaluation; and
- Electronic copy of two previous evaluation reports you have written (independently or as a team).

Applications should be submitted via email to [philipcranley@mcc.org](mailto:philipcranley@mcc.org) by July 8, 2022.

Any questions can be addressed to:

Philip Cranley (PMER Coordinator) [philipcranley@mcc.org](mailto:philipcranley@mcc.org)

MCC Office: (856-21) 312 625