

## Terms of reference

### Evaluation of the agricultural growth & employment programme (AGEP), Bangladesh

#### 1. Background

According to several recent studies there has been remarkable growth in the rural economy of Bangladesh over the past two decades. The number of poor people dropped significantly while food security improved as agricultural output (notably in terms of rice yields) increased. Thus, productivity gains underpinned by technological progress both in terms of inputs and output markets have resulted in impressive overall agricultural sector growth.

Researchers at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) have argued that although agriculture contributes a declining share of gross national product, agricultural growth has a catalytic effect on the non-farm economy, such that a ten percent increase in farm incomes generates a six percent increase in non-farm incomes through upstream and downstream linkages.<sup>1</sup> In this context, considering the priorities for action to promote rural growth in Bangladesh, the World Bank together with the Planning Commission has argued for diversification in agriculture (with a “balanced attention to rice”), a range of policy improvements (notably to ensure the “ecologically optimal use of inputs”) and an enabling environment for business enterprise, particularly for rural non-farm growth.<sup>2</sup>

Support through Danish development assistance (Danida) has played a role in the transformation of the agricultural sector. There is a very long history of assistance in the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors in Bangladesh, dating back to the 1970s. In the 1990s, Danida supported efforts to improve soil fertility through balanced use of fertilizers and to deal with crop losses through the introduction of integrated pest management (IPM) in farming systems.

Following innovations in terms of agricultural research and extension that were initially encouraged by the FAO, and then in the design of agricultural sector support from the 1990s, it was decided that the so-called “farmer field school” (FFS) approach would constitute an important foundation in the sector programmes funded by Danida. The aim of the FFS method of providing advice to farmers using participatory approaches has been to improve the living conditions of poor, marginal and small farmer households – both women and men – “through enhanced, integrated and sustainable agricultural productivity increases.” Thus, agricultural extension services would be provided on a demand-driven basis, seeking to promote agricultural diversification and increased awareness about production techniques, food security and nutrition at household level.

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<sup>1</sup> The IFPRI analysis was published in 2017 in a report entitled: “promoting agricultural growth, technology adoption and crop diversity.”

<sup>2</sup> Using data gathered through household income and expenditure surveys (HIES), it was found that growth in farm income drove half of the reduction in poverty between 2000 and 2010, of which rural non-farm income growth contributed over 40 percent (the World Bank and Government of Bangladesh Planning Commission, the dynamics of rural growth in Bangladesh).

In 2011, the farmer field school approach in Bangladesh was evaluated by Danida. Studies of FFS in different regions of the country were undertaken, as introduced through the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) as well as through the regional livestock and fisheries services. The evaluation team found that over 500,000 rural households had benefitted from knowledge and techniques acquired through participation in these farmer field schools. Furthermore, it was found that there had been a significant impact on household nutrition and food security, notably among the poorest. Household incomes had increased in comparison with control groups (non-FFS participants) and production had diversified. In short, the evaluation concluded that the FFS approach had been very successful in terms of improved livelihoods, not least for many women in the rural communities.

The 2011 evaluation confirmed the value of the FFS approach in supporting the transformation of the rural economy for the benefit of poor, marginal and small farmers as well as women. Thus, in designing the agricultural growth and employment programme (AGEP) it was decided to continue to provide extension services through the FFS approach. But it was also recognized that improved production techniques were not the end of the story and that supporting poor, marginal and small farmers also entailed focusing on the value chains between producers and consumers, i.e. on market linkages. The upshot was a programme to be funded by Danida for five years from 2013 with three components:

- An integrated farm management component (IFMC with DAE);
- An agricultural and food security project (AFSP, with UNDP in the Chittagong Hill Tracts);
- An agri-business development component (Katalyst, co-funded with DfID and the Swiss Development Agency).

According to the 2013 programme description the overall (development) objective of the AGEP was defined as contributing “to an increased pro-poor and inclusive growth and sustainable employment creation.” Although the programme was not intended to directly generate employment, it was anticipated that job opportunities would emerge from interventions that increased the value of farm produce. As such, the programme is consistent with the aim of the 6<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, to reduce poverty in Bangladesh.

Immediate objectives were defined for the three components. As far as the integrated farm management component (IFMC) is concerned, the aim is to increase and diversify agricultural production by female and male landless, marginal and small farming households. A similar aim was defined for the agriculture and food security project (AFSP) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). In both these components, the farmer field school approach forms the basis for efforts to promote production increases and diversification. The objective of the third “agri-business” component of the AGEP was defined as strengthening the competitiveness of the agricultural and agro-business sectors.

Different modalities characterize the three components of the AGEP. As noted above, the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the IFMC. The component aims to empower over 850,000 female and male farmers through farmer field schools in 6 regions of the country as well as to empower service providers and market actors through the establishment of over 800 farmer’s organisations (with “market linkages”). By the beginning of 2018 over 17,000 farmer field schools have been run through a major scaling up effort. Meanwhile, given the post-conflict conditions prevailing in the CHT, the FFS approach in this region is being promoted through the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), which aims to support pro-poor and inclusive development in the three districts where a 1997 peace accord envisaged the devolution of agricultural services to Hill Councils. Thus, a total of 1800 FFS have been rolled out since 2014 with a view to increasing the incomes of the target group (over 40,000 farmers) as well as ensuring better nutrition and less food shortages. It is worth emphasizing that the empowerment of women is considered to be at the core of these interventions.

The agri-business component of the AGEF (called Katalyst) did not include FFS approaches, but was rather intended as an advocacy scheme for the development of the business and trade environment, the introduction of information technologies and innovation in public-private partnerships, as well as export diversification. It will not be included in the AGEF evaluation.<sup>3</sup>

Following the launch of a new Bangladesh Country Programme in 2016, Danish development assistance has been re-structured for a five year period. Consequently, arrangements have been made to continue a second phase of the IFMC for a three year period (2019-21) and similarly an additional grant will be provided to the UNDP for further support to farmer field schools in the CHT over the same period (AFSP II). These are defined and will be carried out as two of the "development engagements" in the country programme.

According to output data gathered by the monitoring and evaluation units of the DAE and the UNDP, the FFS approach and the promotion of market linkages appear to have been successful in both the IFMC and AFSP, with large numbers of farmer facilitators trained, women's groups formed for marketing purposes, etc (as noted above). But as the number of FFS supported through the IFMC in particular increased significantly, questions began to emerge about the quality of the training and the capacities of the key facilitators. Furthermore, as noted in the mid-term review of the AGEF in 2017, an "externally validated evaluation" of the outcomes and impact has not been undertaken.

At the same time there have been difficulties in managing the data pertaining to the results and not least the impact of the FFS. The DAE has conducted an "internal assessment" of the IFMC which suffered from data deficiencies and is incomplete. The UNDP is preparing an "end-evaluation" of the FFS impact which may provide some valuable insights in the particular context of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

On this basis, and given the preliminary steps being taken towards the design of further support for rural development within a new Danida country programme (from 2021), it has been considered opportune to conduct a thorough assessment of the AGEF. The main issue to be explored in the evaluation is male and female farmers' use and application of the knowledge gained through participation in FFS training. In other words, an in-depth evaluation will examine the extent to which incomes have increased and nutrition improved as a result of the adoption of techniques acquired through the farmer field schools and through the establishment of farmer's organisations for crop marketing.

## 2. Objectives of the evaluation

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<sup>3</sup> The Katalyst project has ended and a final report is available.

The objectives of the evaluation are threefold:

- To document the achievements of the AGEP since 2013;
- To analyse the outcomes and impact of the IFMC and AFSP (components) in terms of results, based on the original theories of change, logical frameworks and results frameworks and with a particular emphasis on the adoption of the farming techniques and practices as well as marketing knowledge promoted through the components;
- On the basis of the lessons learned through the AGEP, to prepare recommendations for the future as inputs for the design of a new country programme for Danida in Bangladesh (for five years from 2021-26).

### 3. Scope of work & evaluation questions

Overall the evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the Danida evaluation policy (October 2015) and the OECD-DAC criteria for evaluations analysing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and coherence of the interventions through AGEP. However, these criteria are intended as overall guidance for the evaluation, not as a blueprint. As noted above, the application and use of knowledge gained through farmer field schools is the critical issue to be examined in the evaluation. It is also intended to shed light on the management of large quantities of data, in order to determine how to effectively measure the outcomes and impact of farmer field schools in Bangladesh.

A specification of the main evaluation questions (EQs) is as follows:

With respect to results and achievements

EQ1 what have been the main achievements of the AGEP?

EQ2 what are the results in terms of participation in farmer field schools and the development of market linkages (both in IFMC and AFSP)?

EQ3 what are the costs of providing agricultural extension and training using FFS approaches?

With respect to outcomes and impact

EQ4 are the skills and techniques acquired by the farmers considered relevant and do the farmers adopt and use what is learnt in the farmer field schools and in the market linkages training?

EQ5 what are the critical factors determining the quality of farmer field schools and training in market linkages and are the FFS and marketing development processes adequately organized and managed by the extension services (DAE, together with the livestock and fisheries services)?

EQ6 how has women's empowerment been enhanced through the AGEP?

EQ7 what have been the impacts of the FFS approach as promoted by the DAE and by UNDP in the CHT in terms of agricultural diversification, household income, nutrition and employment?

With respect to lessons learned

EQ8 what obstacles have arisen in the implementation of the AGEP and how have these been overcome?

EQ9 what are the prospects for increased employment arising from improved production techniques and better agricultural marketing, notably in terms of opportunities for young people?

EQ10 what are the key recommendations for the future country programme?

These evaluation questions are expected to be further developed and refined during the inception phase of the evaluation. As noted above, the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are expected to feed into the preparation of a new Danida Country Programme in Bangladesh beginning in 2021.

#### 4. Process, methodology & timing

The evaluation will make extensive use of both qualitative data and the quantitative data gathered in the monitoring and evaluation units of the AGEP component agencies. Other data sources may also be useful, e.g. household surveys, research studies by IFPRI, etc. The Danish Embassy in Dhaka together with the M&E units will assist in the identification of relevant data and documentation.

The evaluation will be undertaken in several phases outlined in the following:

During the inception phase the evaluation team will thoroughly analyse available documents and reports pertaining to the AGEP, farmer field schools, farmer organisations as well as the main development issues in the agricultural sector (including livestock and fisheries) in Bangladesh. A particular focus will be on the quality of the baseline studies of the IFMC and the AFSP (undertaken in 2013-14) and on the quality of data gathered and registered by the monitoring and evaluation units.

The inception phase will include the design and launch of impact assessment surveys covering agreed samples of FFS and non-FFS (control) households in a maximum of 4 selected regions where the IFMC has operated. It is anticipated that results of the end evaluation of the AFSP will inform the design of these surveys. A small survey team will be established with an appropriate partner organisation and a simple household survey questionnaire will be designed and completed covering the agreed samples.

The main study will include consultations and field work in the selected regions as well as interviews with key informants and representatives of the partner organisations. The results of the survey will be processed and analysed by the evaluation team. Case studies may also be prepared to illustrate the dynamics of the FFS approach and the strengthening of market linkages.

Initial findings will be discussed with the evaluation reference group (ERG) prior to the preparation of a draft final report. A workshop will be arranged in Dhaka with key stakeholders to consider the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

The outputs of the evaluation will include:

- An inception report with survey design. The report will provide an overview of the AGEP from 2013-18 and include an evaluation matrix dealing with the evaluation questions as well as a thorough outline of the methodology to be used in particular for the household survey.
- An initial findings paper (not for publication)
- A draft final report
- A final report not exceeding 40 pages.

The evaluation will proceed through the following main steps, noting that all dates are tentative and to be confirmed:

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date/period</b>	<b>Responsible/involved</b>
Initiation of evaluation	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2018	EVAL & ET (evaluation team)
Inception, including survey design	December 2018	ET & partners in Bangladesh
Draft inception report submitted	10 January 2019	ET
Discussion of inception report	mid January 2019	EVAL, ERG & ET
Main study	End Jan-March	ET & partners in Bangladesh
Preliminary findings paper	End March	ET
Discussion of findings	April	EVAL, ERG & ET
Draft report submitted	End April	ET
Workshop in Dhaka	May	ET & partners in Bangladesh
Final report	June 2019	ET

## 5. Organisation

Management of the Evaluation will follow the Danida Evaluation Guidelines (2012) and the OECD-DAC quality standards (2010). There are three sets of roles in the process: a) the Evaluation Management; b) the Evaluation Team (Consultant); and, c) the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG).

### **Role of the Evaluation Management**

The evaluation will be supervised and managed by the Evaluation Department (EVAL) in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The Evaluation Management will:

- Participate in the selection of Evaluation Team based on received tenders and assisted by an independent tender consultant.
- Coordinate with all relevant evaluation stakeholders.
- Ensure that quality control is carried out throughout the evaluation process. In so doing, EVAL may make use of external peer reviewers.
- Provide feedback to the Evaluation Team. Comment on draft versions of the inception report, the work plan, annual field visit reports and the summative evaluation report. Approve final reports.
- Organise and chair meetings of the Evaluation Reference Group.
- Facilitate and participate in evaluation workshops, including possibly an open dissemination workshop towards the end of the evaluation.

- Organise presentation of evaluation results and follow-up on the evaluation for the internal Danida Programme Committee and the Minister for Foreign Affairs (the responsible department or Embassy drafts the management response).
- Advise relevant stakeholders on matters related to the evaluation.

### **Role of the Evaluation Team (the Consultant)**

The DAC evaluation principles of independence of the Evaluation Team will be applied. The Evaluation Team will carry out the evaluation based on a contract with the MoFA and will:

- Prepare and carry out the evaluation according to the ToR, the approved Inception Report, the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards and the Danida Evaluation Guidelines.
- Be responsible to the Evaluation Management for the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.
- Ensure that quality assurance is carried out and documented throughout the evaluation process according to the Consultant's own Quality Assurance Plan as described in the proposal.
- Report to the Evaluation Management regularly about progress of the evaluation.
- Organise and coordinate meetings and field visits, and other key events, including debriefing session and/or validation workshops in the field visit countries.

The Team Leader is responsible for the team's reporting, proper quality assurance and for the organisation of the work. The Team Leader will participate in the ERG meetings and other meetings as required and upon request. It is envisaged that the Team Leader will participate in approximately four meetings in Copenhagen during the whole process.

### **Role of the Evaluation Reference Group**

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established and chaired by EVAL. Other members of the ERG will include the Danish Embassy in Dhaka and other stakeholders. The mandate of the ERG is to provide advisory support and inputs to the evaluation, e.g. through comments to draft reports. The reference group will work with direct meetings, e-mail communication and video-conferencing. The tasks of the ERG are to:

- Comment on the field mission preparation notes, draft inception report, draft annual field visit reports and draft evaluation report with a view to ensure that the evaluation is based on factual knowledge about the engagement and how it has been implemented.
- Support the implementation of the evaluation and promote the dissemination of the evaluation conclusions and recommendations.

Other key stakeholders may be consulted at strategic points in time of the evaluation either through mail correspondence or through participation in stakeholder meetings/workshops.

### **6. Composition and qualifications of the team**

The evaluation will be carried out by:

- A team leader, agro-economist with extensive evaluation experience

- An agriculturalist with experience of training & extension and farmer's organisations
- A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist.<sup>4</sup>

The Tenderer may decide to include personnel for additional functions, e.g. subject matter specialists, although these persons will not be assessed on an individual basis but as part of the overall team composition and backup. The team members are expected to complement each other.

The arrangements for undertaking household surveys of samples of FFS and non-FFS participants must be specified. These will be undertaken by a group of research assistants managed and supervised by the team leader together with the monitoring and evaluation specialist.

The Tenderers should clearly state which of the proposed team members cover the different thematic areas. The team must include experience with all methodologies and tools suggested in the tender. CV's for the following positions will be assessed as part of the tender proposal:

- Team leader;
- Agriculturalist;
- Monitoring and evaluation specialist

The need for additional subject matter specialists should be justified in the technical proposal. The CVs will be assessed on an individual basis. A personnel assignment chart (schedule 4.2) must be included in the technical proposal with the exact input of person days proposed. The organisation of the team's work and the distribution of work days between team members will be assessed as part of the assessment of the technical proposal under the criterion "organisation".

The following **minimum requirements** apply to the qualifications of the evaluation team:

- All team members must be fluent in English;
- At least one team member must be able to read Danish;
- At least one team member must have extensive experience of working in Bangladesh (5 years of long-term or 7 short-term assignments within the last 12 years);
- The team must demonstrate extensive experience dealing with agricultural sector development programmes in South Asia.

The following **minimum requirements** apply to the organisation of work:

- The team leader will participate in the inception and field work for the entire duration;
- The team leader and the monitoring and evaluation specialist will design and supervise the survey of FFS and non-FFS households;
- The team leader will be overall responsible within the team for the report writing;
- The team leader will participate in the ERG meetings as well as a start-up meeting in Copenhagen;
- The team leader is responsible for communication with EVAL.

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<sup>4</sup> See annex A (below) for the criteria to be used for assessment of the qualifications and experience of the team members.

## 7. Eligibility

The OECD-DAC evaluation principles of independence of the evaluation team will be applied. In situations where conflict of interest occurs, candidates may be excluded from participation, if their participation may question the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. Any firm or individual consultant that has participated in the preparation or implementation of the evaluated Danida programmes will be excluded from participation in the tender.

Tenderers are obliged to carefully consider issues of eligibility for individual consultants and inform the Client of any potential issues relating to a possible conflict of interest.<sup>5</sup>

## 8. Inputs

The total budget for the consultancy services is a maximum of DKK 1.9 million. This includes all fees and project related expenses required for the implementation of the contract, including surveys, field trips and workshops in Bangladesh.

The tenderers financial proposal shall include all costs for fees and project related reimbursable expenses. It is the responsibility of the tenderer to ensure that the products and outputs specified above and all other tasks specified in these terms of reference are performed within the framework of the financial proposal and the specified ceiling amounts (see Appendix 3).

The cost of quality assurance (QA) should be included in the tenderer's overhead.

EVAL will cover the expenditures incurred in preparing the final evaluation report for publication and any additional dissemination activities in Denmark as and if agreed upon.

## 9. Requirements for home office support

The Evaluation Team's home office shall provide the following, to be covered by the Consultants fees:

- General home office administration and professional back-up (activities shall be specified).
- Quality assurance (QA) of the consultancy services in accordance with the quality management and quality assurance system described in the Tender. Special emphasis should be given to quality assurance of draft reports prior to the submission of such reports. EVAL may request documentation for the QA undertaken in the process.

The Tender shall comprise a detailed description of the proposed QA, in order to document that the Tenderer has fully internalized how to implement it and in order to enable a subsequent verification that the QA has actually been carried out as agreed.

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<sup>5</sup> See: Danida Evaluation Guidelines (2012), annex 1.

The Tenderer should select a QA team to be responsible for Head Office QA. The member(s) of the QA team should not be directly involved in the evaluation. Their CVs should be included in the Tender, but will not be part of the assessment of the technical proposal.

The QA Manager could be either an external expert or a company staff member. As indicated above, the QA Manager's CV should be included in the tender and will be assessed as part of the assessment of the technical proposal under the criterion "reporting, QA and BIMP."

All QA activities should be properly documented and reported to EVAL.

#### 10. Key references \*\*\* list to be completed in inception

Danida/MoFA (2011): Evaluation of the farmer field school approach in the Agricultural sector Programme Support (ASPS), phase II.

Danida/MoFA (2013): Agricultural growth and employment programme (AGEP), Bangladesh 2013-18 - programme document.

Danida/MoFA (2017): Mid-term review of the Agricultural growth and employment programme (AGEP) – review aide memoire.

GoB (2013): Development project proposal (DPP) for the integrated farm management component (IFMC) of the AGEP.

GoB (2017): Revised development project proposal (RDPP) for integrated farm management component (IFMC) of the AGEP.

IFPRI (2017): Promoting agricultural growth, technology adoption and crop diversity.

UNDP (2013): Agriculture and food security project (AFSP) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts – project proposal.

World Bank (2016): Dynamics of rural growth in Bangladesh – sustaining poverty reduction.

## **Annex A**

### Qualifications of the team leader, evaluation specialist

#### General experience:

- Higher academic degree, preferably Ph.D
- A profile with major emphasis on development issues, with 15 years or more of relevant international experience from development cooperation
- Proven track record in evaluation methods and preferably in political context analysis
- Experience as team leader of evaluations or comparable research assignments

#### Adequacy for the assignment:

- International experience from evaluation work in thematic areas covered by the evaluation
- Extensive international experience from designing and undertaking sector programme evaluation work, including field experience
- Other analytical work or research in thematic areas related to the evaluation

#### Country experience and language:

- Experience from South Asia, preferably from Bangladesh
- Proficiency in spoken and written English

### Qualifications of agricultural training and extension specialist

#### General experience

- Higher academic degree in a field relevant to the assignment
- Major emphasis on developmental issues with 10 years or more of relevant professional experience from international development cooperation
- Experience as team member for evaluations of a comparable level

#### Adequacy for the assignment:

- Experience from programme design or implementation in thematic areas related to the evaluation
- Experience from sector and thematic programme evaluations
- Other analytical work or research in areas relevant for the evaluation

#### Country experience and language:

- Experience from South Asia, preferably from Bangladesh
- Proficiency in spoken and written English

### Qualifications of the M&E specialist

#### General experience

- Higher academic degree in a field relevant to the assignment

- Major emphasis on developmental issues with 10 years or more of relevant professional experience from international development cooperation
- Experience as team member for evaluations of a comparable level

Adequacy for the assignment:

- Experience from programme design or implementation in thematic areas related to the evaluation
- Experience from sector and thematic programme evaluations
- Other analytical work or research in areas relevant for the evaluation

Country experience and language:

- Experience from South Asia, preferably from Bangladesh
- Proficiency in spoken and written English