

## Sustainable Roots Program (SRP)

### Terms of Reference for Contract to Conduct a Baseline Evaluation

#### Background

The Sustainable Roots Project (SRP) is a five-year nutrition promotion program that is designed to support rural communities to increase nutritional status of women, children, and their households. This will be done by promoting production and consumption of health and locally available foods. The project will apply regenerative agriculture, soil and water and sustainable use of forest products to meet dietary and health needs. The project will also support communities with improved access to water for domestic and productive use and will work with government departments and others present in the implementation location to ensure appropriate and synergistic implementation. The Sustained Roots Project is implemented by a consortium led by CARE Zimbabwe and includes Organization of Rural Associations for Progress and Nutrition Action Zimbabwe.

#### Scope of the SRP

The purpose of the project is to improve the nutritional status for vulnerable children and women of reproductive age in 10 communities of Buhera and Tsholotsho districts. It also has the following expected outcomes:

**Specific Objective (SO) 1:** Consumption of sufficient and quality foods by women of reproductive age and children under two years of age increased [Diets]

**Specific Objective (SO) 2:** Barriers to optimal nutrition, especially for children under two years of age and women of reproductive age addressed [Care]

At the same time, the project implements the following key activities, that allow for advancing the overall goal and outcomes:

- Support communities in the design and establishment of resilient design structures to increase water and moisture retention and enhance fertility
- Rehabilitation and establishment of sand water abstraction points and boreholes to support dry season production and access to water
- Train female smallholder farmers to preserve and produce community-preferred indigenous crops and plants in field and homestead gardens (Perma-gardens)
- Train farmers on knowledge systems for sustainable production, extraction, and use of herbs and medicinal plants
- Support farmer households to establish perma-gardens to improve nutrition
- Support women-owned social enterprises around non-timber forest products and other enterprises effectively
- Provide small grants to support on- and off-farm activities
- Training of Social Analysis and Action (SAA) champions to conduct community dialogues
- Conduct community dialogues to address social norms that hinder food consumption
- Expand the Care Group model to include men and promote their participation in household nutrition
- Train project participants on life skills, parenting, and child-protection
- Rehabilitate and establish multi-functional water sources to enhance access to clean water for families, women, and their children, with a primary focus on meeting basic sanitation needs

**Table 1. Geographic Area and Population Coverage**

Region	District	Community	Total Households	Total Household Members
Manicaland and Matebeleland North Provinces	Buhera and Tsholotsho	10 communities/wards across the two districts	4500	22,500

**Table 2. Direct Participants, Target and Impact Groups**

Key Participants	Impact or Target Group	No. Direct Participants
4,500 mothers (women of reproductive age and their households)	4,500 Women of reproductive age and 9,000 children under two years of age	22,500

### Purpose, Objectives, and Rationale

The baseline evaluation will be conducted to collect baseline data for project indicators that will be used to track progress, and measure impact during and at project end. The baseline evaluation will also assess the current status of feedback and accountability mechanisms within the target communities.

### Specific objectives of the baseline evaluation are to;

1. Assess the nutritional status for vulnerable children and women of reproductive age in 10 communities of Buhera and Tsholotsho
2. Assess the barriers to optimal nutrition for children under two years and women of reproductive age
3. Establish existing mechanisms for feedback and accountability, and what mechanisms would communities prefer and easily access.

The evaluation is planned to take place from 10 February 2025 to 10 April 2025.

### Intended Users and Use

The evaluation findings and processes will be used and shared internally with the SRP project team and externally with relevant government and private sector stakeholders, including the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, Ministry of Women Affairs and the Food Security and Nutrition Cluster. The evaluation findings will also be shared with CARE Germany and the project donor. The following table outlines the expected communications to be produced throughout the evaluation process, their purpose, intended users and who is responsible.

**Table 3. Communication, Dissemination and Utilization Plan**

Communication Format	Purpose of Communication	User	Person Responsible	Timing/Dates	Notes
Evaluation process update	Keep informed about evaluation process	SRP project team	Evaluator	Weekly and daily as and when necessary	
PowerPoint presentation	Present preliminary findings	SRP project team	Evaluator	17 March 2025	
Presentation: summary slide deck for different audiences	Present completed/ final findings	SRP Project team,	Evaluator	31 March 2025	

Evaluation report		Relevant Provincial and District level stakeholders			
Evaluation Response Plan	Document actions taken based on the findings	SRP team, project donor	SRP MEAL Technical Working Group	TBA	

### Evaluation Questions, Indicators to be Measured and Methodology

The key questions that the evaluation will explore and try to answer, are:

1. What is the current nutritional status for vulnerable children and women of reproductive age in 10 communities of Buhera and Tsholotsho?
2. What are the barriers to optimal nutrition for children under two years and women of reproductive age in 10 communities of Buhera and Tsholotsho?
3. Which feedback and accountability mechanisms are currently being used by communities, and which mechanisms are most preferred and easily accessible to communities?

The key outcome/impact indicators that the evaluation will measure, and disaggregation levels are in table 4 below. Note that indicators for measurement are subject to addition during the inception phase of the evaluation as shall be determined by the SRP team.

**Table 4: Indicators**

Indicator	Levels of disaggregation
<b>Impact: Improved nutritional status for vulnerable children and women of reproductive age in 10 communities of Buhera &amp; Tsholotsho districts</b>	
O1: Reduced consumption coping strategy index (RCSI) by June 2029	Location, Age, Household type
O2: % reduction in acute malnutrition cases	Location, Household type
O3: Increase in household resilience capacities	Location, Age, Household type
<b>SO2: Barriers to optimal nutrition, especially for children under two years of age and women of reproductive age addressed [Care]</b>	
SO2.1: Percentage of households reporting reduced barriers to accessing nutritious foods Women and Children (Dietary Diversity Score)	Location, Age, Household type
SO2.2: Average household monthly income from diversified livelihoods activities by June 2029	

### Evaluation Design and Data Collection Methods

The suggested design for this evaluation is non-experimental where baseline data will be collected from project target communities without creating a comparison/control group. It is anticipated that changes in nutritional status, food production and consumption practices and gender norms within target communities and among project participants will be compared over time using baseline and endline data. The evaluator/evaluation team should propose the design that is most appropriate for the purpose of the evaluation and to adequately respond to the evaluation questions. The evaluator/evaluation team is responsible for getting approval on the design, from the SRP MEAL Technical Working Group.

**IMPORTANT:** A safeguarding risk assessment should be considered for identifying the possible barriers to participation in the evaluation (in particular for women), and harm and abuse, with mitigations plans and, where needed, resources allocated. Consideration should be given to the suitability of questions asked, how participants are selected to participate, required travel and location of the evaluation data collection.

### Primary Data Collection and Sample Size

The primary data collection process will include both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative methods, the evaluator should consider digital data collection approaches for a household survey. Qualitative methods should include, but not limited to focus group discussions with women, men and youth, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews. The evaluator is responsible for clearly articulating the data collection methods, sampling criteria and techniques, sample size calculated and the different evaluation participants to be engaged. A pilot testing of the data collection instruments among participants who will not participate in the actual evaluation data collection process should be considered essential for the baseline evaluation. The evaluator is expected to adopt and abide by the responsible data management principles from CARE to be shared after contract awarding.

### Secondary Data

The process to incorporate secondary data into the evaluation will include: desk review of the SRP proposal, logical framework, implementation plan and existing literature and research studies for similar projects that will be relevant for the evaluation process and findings.

### Roles, Responsibilities, and the Evaluation Timeline

The following table delineates the key roles and responsibilities of SRP team and the evaluation team during the evaluation process:

**Table 5. Roles and responsibilities on evaluation team(s)**

<b>Person/Organisation</b>	<b>Activity</b>
SRP Team Leader	Evaluation contract management
MEAL Specialist	Evaluation quality assurance
Evaluator	Evaluation design
Evaluator with support from MEAL Specialist	Logistical arrangements
Evaluator	Data collection, storage and analysis
Evaluator	Gender and Power analysis
MEAL Technical Working Group	Support in data collection
evaluator	Presentation of preliminary findings
Evaluator	Report writing and updating of the log-frame
SRP Team Leader	Approval of the evaluation report
Evaluator	Presentation of final evaluation findings
MEAL Specialist	Dissemination of evaluation findings

The following table delineates the timeline and milestones during the evaluation process.

**Table 6. Evaluation timeline and milestones.**

Evaluation Milestone	February				March				April
	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 1
Consultant engagement									
Development of baseline evaluation inception report									
Development of data collection tool									
Field data collection									
Quantitative and qualitative data analysis									
Presentation of preliminary findings									
Submission of draft evaluation report									
Submission of final evaluation report, PPT Slide Deck and Updated Log-frame									

## Deliverables

Key deliverables throughout the evaluation process include:

### 1. Inception Report

An inception report will serve as an agreement between the SRP team and the consultant on how the assignment will be conducted. The following items will be included and finalized with review by the SRP team:

- Outline the consultant's understanding of the questions and issues raised in the TOR
- How to assess the evaluation questions in the TOR
- Research methodology including ethics strategies and protocols
- Key evaluation matrix detailing how each indicator will be assessed
- Data collection tools
- Baseline evaluation implementation plan
- Roles and responsibilities of evaluation/consultancy team members

### 2. Draft Report

The evaluator is expected to submit a draft report for review and input by the SRP team. It is expected this review will take up to 1 week, and the consultant will use the input to conduct additional requested analysis and write-ups.

### 3. Final Report

The external evaluator is accountable to maintain the requirements for the content, format, or length of the final report, overall quality and approved timelines. They will produce a concise report that assesses the SRP indicators listed above. This report should address the comments from the draft report (deliverable #2); the consultant is required to submit the revised report within the agreed timelines for further review and approval by the SRP technical team.

The consultant/ Evaluation Team Leader will be responsible for ensuring the final report adheres to the agreed requirements. The report must not exceed 35 pages (excluding all annexes) in MS Word and use the standard page set-up, margin, fonts, and line spacing. The general outline of the final report should include:

- Cover Page with a title including the name of the project, location, and implementation period
- Table of Contents
- List of Acronyms
- An **executive summary** that focuses on outcomes and impact, is no more than 2 pages in length, and is formatted so that it can be printed as a standalone document about the project.
- **Introduction:** include a project overview and evaluation purpose, objectives, and questions
- **Methodology:** explain how the methodology chosen appropriately answers the evaluation questions. Describe ethics strategies and protocols and how the evaluators protected participants, managed power dynamics, and personally identifiable information.
- **Results:** The data should be organized and presented to answer each of the evaluation questions. Synthesize quantitative and qualitative data and include quotes from respondents. Sources of all evidence must be identified.
- **Conclusion: 3-5 key lessons learned.** These should be short, actionable, and the most important aspects of what the analysis found. It is important to have non-jargon descriptions of these findings. Conclusions must be based only on evidence presented in the report.
- **Recommendations:** Recommendations must directly correspond to the conclusions and findings in the report. These should be evidence based and proactive.
- **Annexes:** Additional important information including references, additional data tables, and the Log-frame updated with baseline data.

#### 4. Power Point

Submit a final PowerPoint presentation which pulls out key findings as they relate to the project indicators.

#### 5. Data sets

The SRP team requires that the datasets that are compiled or used in the process of external evaluation are made available during the data collection process for data quality checks and submitted to CARE Zimbabwe when the evaluation is completed. It is expected the consultant will submit quantitative datasets in Excel and SPSS formats, a) Original raw baseline data sets, and b) a cleaned baseline dataset. The datasets must have complete codebooks where full variable information, language from the questions, and a key which identifies what each numerical response corresponds to (e.g. 0 = no; 1= yes; 97 = don't know; 98 = refuse to answer, etc.). Qualitative data should be submitted in the following formats: a) original digital audio files, b) transcribed interview files, and c) translated interview files; the file names for each of these qualitative files should clearly correspond to one another and include information such as the type(s) of respondents, location, and date.

6. **Updated log-frame:** submit an updated log-frame matrix with baseline data for all indicators measured.

The contract will be a deliverables-based contract, and final payment will be contingent on receiving the agreed deliverables in their final versions meeting acceptable quality standards from CARE.

### Budget

The evaluator/evaluation team is expected to provide a detailed budget, in line with the proposed design, methods and scope.

### Responsible Data Management, Safeguarding and Data Ownership

- The evaluator is supposed to adopt and abide by responsible data management, safeguarding and data ownership principles as suggested by CARE and the SRP team, and these include;

- Informed consent will be obtained from every person participating in the evaluation process. If children are participating, informed consent will be obtained from their parent/carer giver.
- Referral pathways are identified and documented and inform the SRP staff. Prior to undertaking data collection, enumerators must be informed of how to recognise a disclosure of a safeguarding concern and to whom to report.
- Quantitative datasets: should be submitted to CARE, password protected.
- Qualitative textual datasets or transcripts: The data should not be anonymized UNLESS suitable permission has been granted from the person who provided the data. In these circumstances, submit a record of the permission granted, for example a consent form.
- CARE must be provided with a final template of any surveys, interview guides, or other materials used during data collection. Questions within surveys should be assigned numbers and these should be consistent with variable labelling within final datasets.
- In the case of tabular datasets, variable names and variable labels should be clear and indicative of the data that sits under them. Additionally, the labelling convention must be internally consistent and a full codebooks/data dictionary must be provided.
- All temporary or dummy variables created for the purposes of analysis must be included in the datasets. All output files including calculations, and formulae used in analysis should be provided along with any Syntax developed for the purposes of cleaning.
- All datasets should be submitted in one of CARE's acceptable formats:

### **Requisites for Evaluators presenting a Proposal for this Terms of Reference**

A technical and cost proposal based on the above Terms of Reference (ToR) is requested from the evaluator or evaluation team. The proposal should contain as minimum:

1. A detailed description of the overall evaluation design, in accordance to the ToR
2. Schedule of key activities preferably in a format such as a Gantt chart.
  - a. A specific of action for primary data collection work, indicating resources required
3. Detailed budget including a reasonable detail of budget required to cover all costs associated with the evaluation. Make sure to include evaluator's fees of both international or local evaluation team (lead evaluator, technical experts, enumerators, translators, drivers, etc.), international and local travel, per diem, materials, or any other related costs.
4. Description of the evaluation team, with roles and responsibilities of the team leader, supervisory chain and other core members of the evaluation team.  
Include Updated CV of Team Leader and other core members of the Evaluation Team.
5. A profile of the consulting firm
6. A sample report of an evaluation the evaluator or evaluator team has conducted.

### **Profile of the Lead Consultant**

The consultant will have the overall responsibility for planning and leading work under this ToR and for producing high quality assessment deliverables within the agreed budgets and according to the agreed schedules. The Consultant should be a suitably qualified and experienced consultant or consulting firm meeting the following profile:

- An evaluation specialist with a minimum of five years' experience in conducting evaluations of development projects, preferably in the food security, agroecology and rural livelihoods strengthening sectors

- Program/project evaluation experience within the Zimbabwean context.
- Experience with results-based monitoring and evaluation.
- Ability to design and plan the evaluation approach and methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative research methods which include gender and power analysis, data disaggregation, and analysis to understand relationships between variables/indicators.
- Ability to design, manage, and implement primary research in potentially challenging project environments
- Ability to conduct statistical analysis to assess differences between groups.
- Ability to analyze qualitative data to make sense of complex themes,
- Ability to triangulate, interpret, and synthesize multiple lines of evidence to evaluate project outcomes

### Selection Criteria

Scoring %	#	REQUIREMENTS	Guiding Notes
<b>20%</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Overall Proposal Suitability (as based in the RFP)</b>	
10.00%	1	Consultant Profile with relevant evaluation experience, relevant team composition	Consultant to include in the proposal the firm's experience as well as experience from suggested team members
10.00%	2	Demonstration of a clear understanding of the assignment at hand, the scope and expectations of the baseline evaluation	Consultant to share, in the proposal, their clear understanding of the assignment to be done
<b>20%</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Previous Work and Awards</b>	
10.00%	1	Experience in conducting evaluations for food security, agroecology and rural livelihoods strengthening projects using mixed methods evaluation designs and include detailed gender and power analysis.	Provide a detailed experience in the stated fields and how the experience will benefit the assignment at hand
5.00%	2	Relevant academic qualification from team leader	Consultant to submit updated CVs for the proposed team
5.00%	3	Past Performance References for similar evaluations	The consultant should submit a report of previous work done
<b>40%</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Technical Expertise and Organizational Experience</b>	
10.00%	1	Study methods proposed are realistic and relevant to the objectives of assignment	Articulate the evaluation design and approaches to be used for the assignment
10.00%	2	Data collection methods/sources are mapped to each evaluation question	Propose appropriate data collection tools and sources

5.00%	3	Ethics strategies in field data collection and management clearly defined in Proposal, including management of power dynamics and safeguarding (differences among participants and with the research team)	What ethic standards and safeguarding principles will be used during the entire evaluation period
5.00%	4	Data analysis methods, data management, and data security mechanisms are well explained	State the different types of analysis to be used to be able to respond to the key evaluation questions.
5.00%	5	Proposed field plan (timeline) is realistic	Work-plan with clear timelines that fit within the evaluation timelines
5.00%	6	Well explained quality assurance mechanisms	Present a list of measures the consultant will put in place to ensure the evaluation including findings remains of quality
20%	<b>D</b>	<b>Financial Proposal (Value and Cost)</b>	<b>Competitive Prices Payment terms</b>
100%			

### Payment

The contract will be deliverables-based, and final payment will be contingent on receiving the agreed deliverables in their final versions at acceptable quality standards. Forty percent (40%) of the contract amount will be paid after submitting approved inception report and data collection tools, twenty percent (20%) amount will be paid after completion of fieldwork and submission of a well written draft report, forty percent (40%) will be paid after satisfactory completion and submission of all deliverables outlined above (in the deliverables section) in their final approved status.