



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition 2012-2019

#### Final Evaluation

These Terms of Reference (TOR) are a plan for preparing for and conducting an end-of-program evaluation for the **McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition 2012-2019** program funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). This Final Evaluation is commissioned by Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan.

**Date:** Feb 20, 2019

#### 1) Program to be Evaluated

McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program

Funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Implemented between October 2012 and May 2019

The Program was initially scheduled to end in 2016 and had a Final Evaluation carried out that covered 2012-2015 implementation years. However, it was awarded two back-to-back extensions to continue program activities until June 2019.

**Therefore, this Evaluation will cover the implementation period of March 2017 – May 2019.**

#### 2) Purpose of the Evaluation

This Final Evaluation has several key objectives:

- Assess and provide evidence on the performance and results of the program against set objectives and targets;
- Highlight program achievements and successes supported by evidence gathered during this evaluation;
- Identify key lessons learned and provide specific, actionable and evidence-based recommendations for the ongoing and future Food for Education programs;
- Evaluate the degree of school feeding sustainability in target schools after several continuous years of program implementation.

This Final Evaluation will also assess how the achievements are viewed through the perspectives of program stakeholders: MoES officials, school administration and staff, local community and local government.

### 3) Background

Mercy Corps has been working in Kyrgyzstan since 1994. For over fifteen years, Mercy Corps has been providing nutritional and technical support to education institutions in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, including public schools, kindergartens, and vocational schools. Since 2012, Mercy Corps has served as the implementing partner of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition program (FFE). This program is implemented in support of the National School Feeding Program developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Kyrgyz Republic, which is a key stakeholder for this program.

In 2012-2018, Mercy Corps supported 154 public schools and 481 kindergartens across the country by providing over 2,000 metric tons of supplementary commodities (enriched flour, rice, split peas, and vegetable oil). Over 55 million hot meals were prepared for more than 32,000 primary grade students and 50,000 children in kindergartens.

Another important program activity is rehabilitation of school kitchens and purchasing new kitchen equipment to enable them to serve hot meals to primary grade students on a regular basis. Mercy Corps also provide a number of infrastructure grants based on school needs, including construction or repair of sanitation and handwashing facilities, installation of heating systems and improved windows, etc. All infrastructure grants and kitchen rehabilitation are supported by local community contributions (up to 30% of the total project cost on average).

Aside from providing commodities and infrastructure support for a successful school feeding program, Mercy Corps also builds and improves capacity of key stakeholders through a series of workshops and trainings on program management for members of school administrations, local government, and other beneficiaries. Moreover, Mercy Corps works with parents of primary school children to improve nutrition and hygiene behaviors at home. Last but not least, all cooks working in the target schools attended professional courses to upgrade their skills with a focus on child nutrition and learn safe food preparation and storage methods.

**Over the course of the implementation period to be evaluated (March 2017 – May 2019), the program worked with the following 3 groups of educational institutions:**

- **70 “pilot” public schools** that entered the program in 2012 and graduated the program in May 2018. Mercy Corps continues providing technical support to these schools in 2018-2019 academic year, but food commodities are no longer provided.
- **84 schools** that enrolled in 2017 and currently continue receiving full programmatic support under the new Food for Education 2017-2021 program: food commodities, infrastructure grants, trainings and workshops, etc. These schools will receive food commodities for one more school year (2019-2020).
- **61 recently opened kindergartens** that received full set of USDA food commodities for one school year (2017-2018), as well as professional courses for cooks and training sessions for parents. Infrastructure and kitchen rehabilitation support was not provided.

#### 4) Evaluation Design

##### i. Evaluation Questions

This Final Evaluation should answer the following key evaluation questions with the main focus on sustainability of the intervention:

**Relevance**<sup>1</sup>: (1) Was the program's design an appropriate solution to meet the stated objectives and results? (2) How did stakeholders perceive the program's design and its activities? (3) To what degree was program implementation aligned with the goals and objectives of the relevant government ministries (MoES, MoH)?

**Effectiveness**: (1) Did the program meet indicator targets? (2) How do program staff and stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the processes and resources used by the program? (3) Did program activities show signs of creating unintended positive or negative outcomes? If yes, which activities contribute to this?

**Efficiency**: (1) Have any programmatic or financial adjustments been made during the course of the program? Why? If so, were they appropriate to the situation? (2) To what degree was feedback from the previous FE and stakeholder input incorporated into the program? (3) Could the same results have been achieved with alternative, and less resource intensive, approaches?

**Impact**: (1) To what degree have there been changes in each of the following that are attributable to the program: (a) health, nutrition and dietary practices at the schools; (b) government financial support for literacy and school feeding activities, including local government; (c) nutrition behaviors of families for children at home. (2) To the degree that attribution is possible, what combination of activities is responsible for the above impacts?

**Sustainability**: (1) To what extent are school administrators, local and national government agencies showing signs of their commitment and ability to continue primary school feeding beyond the program? (2) To what extent are school administrators, local and national government agencies showing signs of their commitment and ability to continue improved literacy instruction practices beyond the program? (3) What incentives are in place to ensure program stakeholders will continue activities? (4) Have the program activities contributed towards improved information sharing between primary schools and local and national MoES officials? (5) What key factors have contributed to the variation in target schools' degree of feeding program success as measured through dietary diversity, continuous community support, and other aspects of program implementation?

---

<sup>1</sup>All main program components should be assessed under this evaluation question: school feeding/commodities provision, infrastructure rehabilitation, and capacity building.

## ii. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology will be a non-experimental study that will employ several collection tools to explore program results related to key program indicators, and to answer evaluation questions listed above.

Bidding evaluation entity is required to design and propose a mixed methods evaluation methodology including, but not limited to the following data collection methods:

- Quantitative analysis of existing monitoring data collected throughout the program against set indicator targets;
- Semi-structured interviews with key program staff, stakeholders from MoES and other relevant government bodies at district and community level;
- FGDs with adult program beneficiaries: parents, school staff and administration, local government representatives;
- Structured observations carried out in a sample of program schools<sup>2</sup>;
- Document review;
- Qualitative methods such as contribution analysis, to understand the effectiveness of program interventions and how they led to the observed changes.

It should be noted that given the different programmatic approaches applied to the 3 groups of beneficiary institutions outlined in section 3, this FE is expected to use a tailored approach to each group:

- **70 graduated pilot schools:** full evaluation with particular attention to long-term sustainability; this group of schools should be the main focus of this FE.
- **84 schools currently enrolled in the program:** partial evaluation<sup>3</sup> aimed at assessing program implementation progress to date and providing actionable recommendations for their remaining year in the program (2019-2020).
- **61 kindergartens:** partial evaluation with qualitative methods focused on assessing the role of USDA-provided food commodities in establishing feeding programs in recently opened kindergartens.

The details of the evaluation approach, including methods and design, will be further discussed and negotiated with the selected evaluation entity.

---

<sup>2</sup>Appropriate sample size and sampling approach should be suggested by the bidding evaluation entity in the application; it should be taken into consideration that the program is implemented in all 7 oblasts in the country.

<sup>3</sup>With the understanding that these schools will be subject to a full evaluation at the end of the current FFE 2017 program.

### iii. Existing Program Information Sources

Mercy Corps will provide the selected evaluation entity with the following documents and data to support carrying out agreed upon evaluation activities:

- FFE 2012 Final Evaluation Report (2012-2015);
- FFE 2012 Extension proposal narrative and annexes (2017-2019);
- FFE 2012 Extension workplan;
- Biannual donor reports;
- Performance Management Plan containing information on program indicators and data collection methodology and tools;
- List of beneficiary educational institutions and key stakeholders;
- Program databases with information on participating schools, conducted trainings, grants and commodities provided;
- Indicator-specific databases, namely: school enrollment, attendance, number of meals provided, dietary diversity, usage of provided food commodities, etc.;
- Monthly reports from the field monitoring team with qualitative information on program implementation quality;
- Grant agreements for kitchen rehabilitation and infrastructure projects;
- Program success stories;
- Training materials on WASH, good nutrition, and other topics covered during the program.

## 5) Team Composition, Roles & Responsibilities

This FE will be led by an independent evaluation entity working in cooperation with the MC MEL Manager, key program staff (including Country and Programs Directors), government officials, and beneficiary institutions and individuals.

To successfully carry out this FE, the evaluation entity is required to provide a dedicated evaluation team consisting of<sup>4</sup>:

- Lead Evaluator/Team Leader with at least 10-15 years of evaluation experience, particularly of long-term development programs and complex and dynamic contexts;
- Experience with evaluating food assistance and/or school feeding programs will be a significant advantage;
- Expertise in designing mixed-methods evaluations and data collection tools, including providing training, troubleshooting during data collection, and conducting interviews and/or FGDs;

---

<sup>4</sup>It is possible to have one team member fulfill several requirements; in this case, relevant supporting documents must be included in the application package to highlight that team member's capacity to fill multiple roles.

- 5-10 data collectors/enumerators to conduct interviews, FGDs, and site visits for observations; *it is crucial for the field data collection team to have relevant language skills (Russian and/or Kyrgyz)<sup>5</sup> and in-depth knowledge of the local context<sup>6</sup>.*

In addition to the technical skills and expertise outlined above, it would be advantageous to have the following:

- Technical expertise in nutrition, child nutrition, or food security;
- Knowledge of and field experience in the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Previous experience with carrying out evaluation assignments for USDA;
- Previous experience with Mercy Corps MEL policies and requirements, as well as organizational culture and programming;
- Experience with programs based in educational institutions, particularly in the post-Soviet space.

#### i. Chart of Responsibilities

Level of Effort <sup>7</sup> (workdays)	Activity	Stakeholder
2 days	Finalize FE scope of work and timeframe	Evaluation team, MC MEL Manager and key staff
2 days	Conduct document review	Evaluation team
5 days	Develop evaluation methodology and necessary data collection tools	Evaluation team
5 days	Develop inception report outlining methodology, data collection plan and tools	Evaluation team
3 days	Plan logistics: domestic travel, translators, translation of evaluation tools, drivers, vehicles, etc.	MC KG staff in coordination with HQ Desk and Evaluation team
½ day	In-country briefing with the key program staff	Lead Evaluator/Team Leader, MC MEL Manager and key staff
5 days	Train data collection team; test and finalize data collection instruments	Lead Evaluator, Evaluation team
10 days	Implement data collection (KIIs, FGDs, site visits and observations); simultaneous data entry	Evaluation team

<sup>5</sup>For other team members, MC Kyrgyzstan will provide a dedicated staff member to provide translation support during meetings and interviews.

<sup>6</sup>MC Kyrgyzstan strongly recommends hiring the field team locally through a number of existing data collection and research companies.

<sup>7</sup>Suggested Level of Effort should be used by the bidding evaluation entity to estimate budget based on the daily rates for the suggested team members and other associated expenses.

5 days	Analyze data, including data provided by MC	Lead Evaluator, Evaluation team
3 days	Prepare draft evaluation report	Lead Evaluator, Evaluation team
5 days	Draft report review	MC MEL Manager, HQ and key staff
5 days	Draft report review	USDA
5 days	Second draft	Lead Evaluator, Evaluation team
3 days	Second draft review	MC MEL Manager, HQ and key staff
1 day	Report finalization	Lead Evaluator

## 6) Description of Deliverables

### *i. Preliminary Schedule*

The activities listed in the table above with the suggested level of effort should be carried out within the following preliminary timeline:

Document review, methodology design, tools development, inception report drafting and review	March 2019
Inception report submission with the data collection plan and finalized tools	End of March 2019
Field data collection in-country, including training on tools (3 weeks)	April 8-26, 2019
Data analysis and report drafting	May 2019
Draft Evaluation Report submission	End of May 2019
Final Evaluation Report submission	<b>June 28, 2019<sup>8</sup></b>

It is important to be able to carry out field data collection no later than **end of April 2019** for the following reasons:

- To have access to program schools and be able to observe school feeding process before public schools go on spring break in early May;
- To allow sufficient time for the second semester (Jan-May 2019) to pass in order to capture as many program results as possible.

Exact dates for key deliverables and the overall evaluation timeframe will be discussed with the selected evaluation entity and specified in the contract.

### *ii. Report Structure & Content*

---

<sup>8</sup>The final submission date is based on the USDA requirement to have the final report no later than 60 days from the fieldwork completion.

The Final Evaluation Report must be written in English, not exceed 50 pages (excluding annexes) and follow the structure outlined below:

- **Cover Page, List of Acronyms**
- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary:** This section should be a clear and concise stand-alone document that gives readers the essential contents of the evaluation report, including a summary of major findings, lessons learned, and recommendations.
- **Methodology:** This section should be sufficiently detailed to help the reader judge the accuracy of the report and its findings.
- **Limitations:** This section should address constraints and limitations of the methodology, and the implications of these limitations for the findings, including whether and why any of the evaluation findings are inconclusive.
- **Results:** This section should provide a clear assessment of progress with respect to indicators / targets / objectives and evaluation questions.
- **Synthesis, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned:** This is space for the evaluation team to think about the data and results and make concrete recommendations for current or future program improvements, pull out organization lessons learned, and generally comment on data and results.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Disclose any conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest, including the interest of program staff in having a successful program.
- **Annexes:** These should include a complete file of data collection instruments in English and translations; list of stakeholder groups with number and type of interactions; TOR, data collection protocols used, etc.

The evaluation team is also required to submit cleaned datasets and original transcripts of all primary data collected for this FE and all photographs taken during field visits in electronic format.

## 7) Stakeholder Involvement and Plans for Dissemination

The key audiences for this FE will be USDA, MC program management and staff, local community and government partners such as the MoES and MoH, whose activities will be addressed in the evaluation, and other actors working to improve child nutrition and educational environment Kyrgyzstan.

First, preliminary results of the FE will be presented at the Program Close Out workshop at the end of May 2019. Second, Mercy Corps will organize a stakeholder workshop to discuss key results and lessons learned with the key audience comprising of MoES and MoH officials, international organizations, and beneficiaries.

The Executive Summary will be translated in Russian and Kyrgyz and distributed to the intended audiences. Program achievements and lessons learned will be developed into a 2-pager and distributed to key Program stakeholders in Russian, English and Kyrgyz. It will also be available on MC Kyrgyzstan website, MC Digital Library and through other sources as relevant.