



Terms of Reference

ADRA Norway is seeking proposals from relevant parties to take on the role of Strategic Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning and Accountability (MERLA) Consultant (a firm, or a team of consultants) to support ADRA Norway's main **Education Program** in line with the below Terms of Reference.

1. Background

ADRA Norway is one of the leading international education development and humanitarian organisations in Norway. Through our work, we strive to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, irrespective of their religious, political, social, ethical or national background. ADRA Norway prioritises both humanitarian and long-term relief and development work. It has a strong interest in the field of education and fragility, and works to strengthen its approaches in the development-humanitarian-peace nexus.

ADRA Norway has an integrated approach to education, by means of “whole school approach” that involves students, teachers, parents, community, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the government working together to enable all children and youth to access a quality and inclusive education in both fragile and longer-term development settings. This approach is complemented by food security and climate change adaptation interventions to address barriers to education and learning. ADRA employs a rights-based approach where, through partnerships with children, women, their families, civil society and government, we uplift the voices of the excluded and marginalised to be heard on issues that affect them. This builds mutual understanding between the rights holders and the duty bearers and promotes the rights of vulnerable groups to fully participate in and benefit from their societies.

ADRA Norway is a member of the international ADRA network with about 120 locally governed country offices, eight regional offices and an international network office. ADRA Norway works in direct partnership with local ADRA partners in developing countries to act as a catalyst for change, inspiring, engaging and empowering people to strive together to overcome poverty and injustice, and managing the risks and impacts of disasters.

2. Project background / context

Action to Strengthen Partnerships for Inclusion, Resilience and Education (ASPIRE) (2024-2028) is implemented by The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Norway in partnership with ADRA offices in Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Uganda and Myanmar with financial support from Norad.

The overall goal of the ASPIRE programme is *inclusive education supported by a strengthened civil society and delivered through strengthened institutions contributes to building peaceful, resilient, and prosperous communities*. The aim is to strengthen communities to become more resilient and food secure in the face of climate change so they can ensure all girls and boys have access to quality *at* primary and secondary education and vocational training, leading to increased learning outcomes and employment opportunities.

These include primary and secondary schools, non-formal education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in project countries. Overall, ASPIRE will work with approximately 200,000 students (50% girls), parents, CSOs and host government authorities. ASPIRE promotes inclusive, gender-responsive education; facilitates healthy, safe and protective learning environments with appropriate infrastructure, policies and action; strengthens effective teaching, learning and school management; engages students, families and communities as active participants in education; and builds civil society to hold government accountable for education systems, policies, practices and investment. Under ASPIRE, TVET has shifted from being focused only on skills relevant to traditional urban and peri-urban settings, to skills relevant to rural economy and food value chains. Outcomes and outputs are described in the Annex 1. ASPIRE Theory of Change, Annex 2. ASPIRE Results Framework and Annex 3. ASPIRE Uganda Results Framework.

3. Purpose/Objectives of the strategic partnership

The purpose of this strategic MERLA partnership TOR is to support ASPIRE's main MERLA processes over a period of five years. Below is a description of expected processes described in lots, that the strategic partner will be responsible for:

Lot 1: Baseline study: To design and conduct a baseline study for the ASPIRE programme to capture data that will benchmark monitoring, evaluation and learning in education and TVET. The purpose of the ASPIRE programme baseline survey is to collect information on selected objective, outcome and output indicators (highlighted in yellow under annex 2 and annex 3) to provide benchmark values for setting targets and refining the programme theory of change and objectives. The baseline values will provide a basis to measure progress, change and impact of the programme. The context analysis will be required in order to analyse the quantitative nature of indicators as well as the current data in key areas of the programme. The baseline study should take place during second half of 2024 and end in the beginning of 2025. Data collection should take place during September-November 2024, in education institutions and communities in programme locations in Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Uganda and Myanmar. The study should include assessing students learning outcomes using literacy and numeracy ACER, or EGRA/EGMA tests or similar in at least three selected countries. ASPIRE Uganda is also slightly different from the rest of the countries, because it does not have an education component.

The specific and technical objectives of the baseline study are:

On the education system:

- To gather data to understand the education context in target areas of the project and the perceptions of all stakeholders (i.e. government, school, teacher/student, and parent/community level) of ASPIRE, education, TVET and the barriers to access, learning, transition and completion.
- To develop the baseline study to set the benchmark data for a selection of quantitative indicators around the areas of transition, literacy and numeracy rates, education systems.
- To establish baseline levels for a selection of intermediate outcome and objective level indicators. To identify differences across various subgroups such as region, age, gender, disability, etc. (where possible).

On the TVET system:

- To provide an analysis of in-country professional development pathways for TVET graduates.
- To map TVET trainers certification, barriers to professional development and recommendations.

- To assess current practices around people with disabilities in TVET centers (absence policies, assessment norms, enrolment programs, teaching approaches etc.).
- To gather data to understand the TVET context in target areas of the project and the perceptions of all stakeholders (i.e. government, school, teacher/student, and parent/community level), including private sector, TVET, and the barriers to access, learning, transition and completion.
- Market study. To gather data on market demands and needs to identify key vocations that ASPIRE could promote in the region/country. Greater focus should be placed on vocations for rural economy and skills that contribute to value chains.

*Only partners in Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan and Myanmar have a TVET component.

On inclusion and gender:

- To assess various types and levels of marginalization in programme target areas.
- To provide an overview of current beliefs and practices around gender and inclusion of marginalized groups.
- To map current practices of communities and service available in the area of protection in the programme target areas.

TVET component

On the private sector

- Private sector and stakeholder mapping in TVET target areas (including what types of enterprises dominate the sectors in terms of size and ownership).
- Analyse the relationship between private and the TVET sector in target areas (including curriculum development, types of collaboration, internships etc.)
- To develop an employer-based skills-need assessment (including areas and sectors in need of highly skilled workers and the specific skills). Focus should be given to skills relevant to rural economy and aligned with ASPIRE's food security ambitions.
- Market analysis for women employability and professional development pathways.
- To develop a gender mapping by vocation courses/skills provided at target TVET centers, showing barriers and suggesting recommendations.

The assessment is expected to enable all implementing partners (ADRA offices in Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Uganda and Myanmar) to conduct a study review and understanding of the programme by applying participatory methods and a reflection workshop.

Additionally, the study will assess students learning outcomes using literacy and numeracy ACER tests or similar in at least three countries which will be agreed between parties.

Lot 2: Annual learning and Reflection: ADRA Norway will apply a thorough adaptive management approach to ASPIRE where we have an intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context. Adaptive management will always aim to reach the originally intended program goal(s) while considering evolving internal and external factors that may require adaptability to ensure the program is on the right path to achieving its goals. This process includes learning and working collaboratively across teams of different functions within ADRA Norway and across all partners. We expect to conduct After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Pause, Reflect and Learn (PRL) processes regularly, but we want to conduct formal processes on an annual basis (or as otherwise recommended and proposed by the Consultant) to capture key

lessons, reflection, to analyze, address, and modify approaches to improve program outcomes. Additionally, formative and action research can be identified and recommended.

Lot 3: Program Evaluation (optional): ADRA Norway and Norad have agreed to conduct an ASPIRE program evaluation during 2027. The *program evaluation* will be undertaken with all stakeholders to evaluate progress, highlight achievements and challenges, and measure final outcomes and impact during year 4 of the program. The results of the evaluation will be shared across the program, with Norad, CSO partners and other education stakeholders, including government. Conducting the end-term evaluation at the end of year 4 based on DAC guidelines will also allow for some measures to be taken in year 5 to enhance impact and sustainability of the Program. This will provide evidence for decision-making and ensure that lessons learnt are used to inform future education programs.

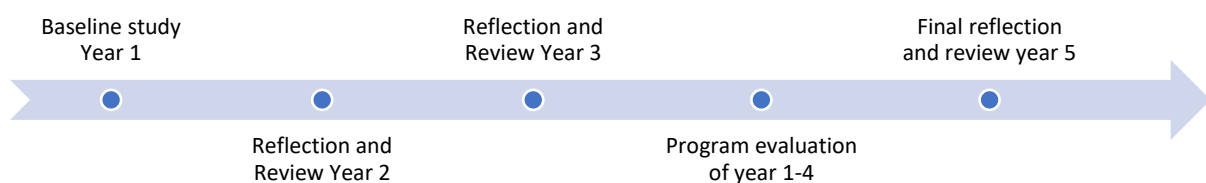
Key evaluation and learning questions will inform the baseline and endline studies. These have been informed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee's five principles for evaluation.

High level program evaluation questions:

1. Were the program interventions and activities relevant and appropriate?
2. Did the program achieve the desired results?
3. Did the program contribute to the relevant government/global education outcomes?
4. Were the program activities implemented as planned and on time to achieve the desired impact?
5. Were the program activities the most efficient activities to achieve the impact?
6. What aspects of the program will be sustained after the projects end?
7. How has gender, disability and social inclusion been addressed in the program?

These questions will help ADRA's CSO partners, education stakeholders and Norad understand the impact the ASPIRE program has made to the education and wellbeing of boys, girls, children with disability, youth and women in target communities in Ethiopia, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Somalia and South Sudan. The Program Evaluation Terms of Reference and Budget must be approved by Norad, before it is agreed with any Consultant; however, ADRA Norway is seeking interested parties that meet the selection criteria, to apply for the program review and provide an indicative budget only. ADRA Norway reserves the right not to allocate the Lot 3 to any applicant, until the ToR and budget have been approved by Norad.

Here is a schedule of tasks that the ADRA Norway and its partners have agreed to conduct during the ASPIRE timeframe:



Interested parties can choose to apply for any of the lots or combination of lots described above; however, it is mandatory to have Lot 1 as part of the application.

4. Scope of work, methodology and approach

The ASPIRE baseline survey will utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data, ensuring in-depth analysis of status of objective, outcome and output indicators. Data collection

methods will include document reviews of programme documents including the programme proposal, national and local development plans and education strategies, government statistics and annual school census reports, and education status reports for target regions; focus group discussions; school and household surveys; and key informant interviews with relevant partners and stakeholders.

As much as possible, the consultant should ensure the baseline survey is conducted in a participatory manner and that the exercise enables participating staff to gain useful data collection and analysis skills. Children, SMCs and PTAs, education officials and authorities, ADRA, and other stakeholders should be meaningfully and fully involved in the survey.

The consultant is expected to coordinate planning, data collection training, tool testing, and analysis. The methodology to be proposed by the consultant in the technical proposal will be reviewed by the steering committee of the evaluation who will approve it before commencement of the assignment.

Baseline research methods must provide data that is sufficiently representative, detailed and accurate for the purpose of evaluation, particularly at the output and outcome level. The baseline study must provide baseline data for the programme's log-frame objective, outcome and output selected indicators. As part of this baseline study and as an annex report, the consultant will also help to make recommendations on further refining ASPIRE evaluation questions and developing key internal indicators for the evaluation questions. Where possible, a baseline also needs to be developed for these.

Measuring learning: Learning is a core outcome of the ASPIRE. We expect that the evaluation team can collect data on math and literacy using ACER tests in at least three countries. Data collection will be done by project staff or local enumerators that the ADRA partners will facilitate and pay independently from this task. However, the Evaluation Team is not expected to assess learning outcomes by administering ACER tests to a statistically significant sample of children. ADRA Norway hopes to find an evaluation team that has past experience in administering ACER, EGRA/EGMA or similar test and reserves the right to not include this task as part of the contract.

Integrating gender-sensitive and participatory methods for working with marginalised children, and children living with disabilities: The Evaluation Team should integrate methods tailored to working with marginalised children and children with disabilities, including creative and participatory ways to engage beneficiaries in the process of gathering and interpreting data. The design and implementation of the evaluation must adhere to ADRA Norway's safeguarding policies, policies on child protection and ethical standards in monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning. Within the proposal, the Evaluation Team will need to clearly outline their approach to managing and reporting safeguarding risks, including suspected or actual cases of abuse.

Responsibility of the project:

1. To provide the project proposal, Results Framework, Theory of Change, MERLA Framework, other evaluations and reviews, reports and other relevant documents.
2. Overview of the project, list of communities and schools per district.
3. Contact list of key program staff available locally.
4. Support identifying suitable local enumerators if needed.
5. Support in setting up introductory meetings with relevant stakeholders and communities.
6. Data collection logistics support and constraints (school timings, holidays, testing schedules, access to respondent groups, etc.), as required.
7. Collaborative workshops with Evaluation Team to finalise evaluation questions and methodology.

Responsibility of the Consultant:

1. Submit a full list of contacts for all staff involved in the Evaluation Team during the inception meeting.
2. Describe the overall evaluation approach, prior evaluation reports and available datasets.
3. Collaborate with the project and contracting authority to agree on evaluation questions.
4. Identify options for methodologies and possible tools for the agreed evaluation questions.
5. Design or modify tools where necessary, in consultation with the ADRA Norway MERLA staff and secure approval for all data collection tools.
6. Report any safeguarding or child protection concerns as soon as possible and within 24 hours to the ADRA Norway Safeguarding Advisor.¹
7. Perform child protection and safeguarding background checks on all their staff involved in evaluation activities, including contractors.
8. Submit (by email) to the ADRA Norway MERLA Advisor weekly progress reports during the evaluation period, summarising activities / tasks completed to date (% achieved), challenges and mitigation strategies, time spent, etc.
9. Run analysis of the findings and produce reports which sufficiently explore and explain the results.
10. Develop and agree on a reporting structure and format with ADRA Norway, including early presentations of emerging findings and produce any other relevant dissemination materials, and share findings with the partners.
11. Review the project's self-reporting of achievements and progress towards lasting impact, including through the collection of evidence to triangulate the project's claims.
12. Conduct a thorough desk review, including examining available data from prior evaluations and from monitoring, from other country-specific reports and activities to inform tools, analysis, reporting.

For fieldwork, please note these may not all be appropriate based on the context at the time of data collection:

13. Contact the ADRA Norway MERLA Advisor on a daily basis during the fieldwork stage of the evaluation.
14. Train enumerators for the assessment.
15. Make own logistical arrangements to reach the selected schools and / or communities and organise interviews and ensure full logistical support for the entire exercise across all districts.
16. Ensure individual data collection reports outlining progress achieved and any challenges are completed by enumerators and that these are compiled into an overall data collection report.

5. Country field visits

We expect the Consultant to work with in-country partners who can access the communities we work with. We would expect the successful Consultant to demonstrate flexibility and creativity in adapting the evaluation approach as necessary to respond to existing circumstances, while ensuring that the evaluation fulfils the fundamental requirements of research questions and methodology requirements outlined above.

6. Ethics and risk management

Research ethics plan: Bidders are required to set out their approach to ensuring complete compliance with international good practice relating to research ethics and protocols, particularly

¹ Relevant contact details will be shared with the External Evaluator once appointed.

with regards to safeguarding children and vulnerable groups (including girls and people with disabilities). Consideration should be given to:

- Administrative, technical and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality of those participating in research.
- Safeguards for those conducting research.
- Do No Harm safeguards for children participating in research, including child-safe physical safeguards as well as emotional/psychosocial safeguards.
- Appropriate time allocated to engage with children participating in the research.
- Parental or caregiver consent concerning data collection from children or collation of data about children.
- Age- and ability-appropriate assent processes based on reasonable assumptions about comprehension for the ages of children and the disabilities they intend to involve in the research.
- Appropriate spaces and methodologies tailored in consideration of unique needs of girls and boys, including those with disabilities and for vulnerable adults.
- Appropriate language and communication for different ages and the disabilities of children involved in the research.

Ethical approval will need to be secured from ADRA Norway before data collection activities can commence. This will include the submission of complete research tools and protocols. Further information will be provided to the successful Evaluation Partner.

Risk management plan: It is important the successful Evaluation Partner has taken all reasonable measures to mitigate any potential risks to research participants and the delivery of the required outputs for this evaluation. Therefore, the Evaluation Team should submit a comprehensive risk management plan covering:

- Specific safeguarding risks (for both children and adults) and mitigating strategies, including reference to the child protection policy and procedures that will be in place.
- Health and safety issues that may require significant duty of care precautions, with particular consideration paid to risks relating to COVID-19.

7. Planning and deliverables

The deadline for proposals is 16 August, 2024. It is expected a contractor will be selected on or before 5 September, 2024.

The successful contractor will provide the following deliverables against the following suggested timeline (to be agreed in the inception phase):

Item	Description	Timeframe
1	Inception report	25 September 2024
2	Tools, mapping of tools and available data to evaluation questions and logframe (selected indicators), sampling frame	11 October 2024
3	Data collection	16 December 2024
3	Presentation of emerging findings to ADRA Norway, proposed report outline submitted for feedback	31 January 2025
4	Evaluation report, including annexes	28 February 2025

The draft and final evaluation report should be no longer than 50 pages, excluding the executive summary and annexes. The report should indicatively be structured as follows:

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Description of the project
- Overview of the evaluation approach, the evaluation methodology and methods used, including limitations and challenges (detailed methodology to be provided in annex)
- Findings
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Annexes

All reports should be submitted in electronic form and should be submitted in English.

In addition to the above:

1. Applicants are required to provide a **detailed workplan** incorporating all relevant tasks and milestones of the evaluation, from start to finish; they are also required to include in their detailed workplans the milestones set out below (please note final dates will be confirmed once evaluators are recruited and initial discussions are scoped with the Evaluation Team).
2. The Evaluation Team will be required to deliver an online **presentation** of the evaluation findings, as an integral part of the submission process. An in-country presentation is desirable.
3. Other **communication materials** for dissemination are encouraged. The project is particularly interested in materials which will help us feed back to the beneficiaries and communities we work alongside, engaging stakeholders more widely. These will be agreed with the project team during the inception phase.
4. **Final Data Collection Tools** – The Evaluation Team and ADRA Norway will work collaboratively on all methods of data capture for the evaluation. At the end of the evaluation, the Evaluation Team will be expected to return these tools to ADRA Norway, including a clean copy of all data collection tools developed and used in the study. Tools and training of enumerators should be done in both English and French.
5. **Cleaned Data Set (including transcripts)** – The Evaluation Team will be expected to provide a fully ‘cleaned-up and anonymised’ dataset for both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the evaluation.

8. General guidelines, submission and selection criteria

A technical proposal and a financial proposal should be submitted in two separate PDF documents to with the subject line “Confidential proposal for Strategic ASPIRE MERLA Partner”. Interested parties should separate between technical proposals and financial proposals for each lot.

The deadline for proposals is 16 August 2024, COB, Norwegian time to the following email address: elidon.bardhi@adranorge.no with a copy to anna.kornienko@adranorge.no. Questions can be asked throughout the pre-submission planning phase. Technical proposals should, as a minimum, include a section on:

- i. Background and contract management capacity of the evaluator.
- ii. Understanding of the terms of reference.
- iii. Proposed approach and methodology.
- iv. Proposed methods and sampling.
- v. Workplan including deliverables.

- vi. Proposed team including roles and responsibilities and time-input allocation for each team members, as well as CVs of each member of the Evaluation Team (no more than 3 pages), detailing relevant skills and experience including any examples of published research.
- vii. Quality Assurance plan that sets out the systems and processes for quality assuring the evaluation and research process and deliverables of the project from start to finish.
- viii. Ethics and Child Safeguarding approaches: applicants are required to set out their approach to ensuring complete compliance with international good practice with regards to research ethics and protocols.
- ix. Risk Management plan.
- x. Relevant annexes that further substantiate the technical bid, including but not limited to:
 - a. Two examples of relevant previous work undertaken by the Evaluation Team (involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis).
 - b. References: Please provide two references who we may contact to discuss experiences of working with you.
- xi. Indicate which lot or combination of lots is relevant to.

The currency of the financial proposal is in NOK, USD or EURO. Please assure that the technical proposal does not refer to any financial figures of the bid.

All eligible proposals will be assessed based on this Terms of Reference and awarded scores following objective technical criteria under four categories. The weighting for each criterion is given in brackets.

- A. Expertise of the firm or consultant (15%)
 - Minimum of 10 years of experience in conducting programmatic evaluations in the development sector.
 - Strong experience in education, gender, inclusion and international development programme evaluations.
 - Experience with Norad funding is desirable.
- B. Proposed approach, methodology and workplan (30%)
 - The technical proposal should include and clearly articulate the approach, methodology and methods proposed for the assessment and/or learning and reflection processes.
 - The proposal should include a clear workplan with roles and responsibilities and allocation of days for different team members specified.
- C. Qualifications and experience of the Evaluation Team (35%)
 - All core team members should have at least an advanced university degree in education, economics, international development or social sciences; or significant experience within the sector.
 - The team should have experience of:
 - Learning and reflection.
 - Experience in conducting baselines or evaluating programmes in the context of least developed country settings; the Evaluation Team should be able to demonstrate they have the appropriate language skills within their wider team to conduct the research required in the context.
 - Specialised thematic expertise on the subject matter evaluated, i.e. gender in education, quality in education, teacher development, safe learning environment, inclusive education, food security, market studies.
 - Proficiency in English in the core team is mandatory. Proficiency in French in the wider team is desirable, especially since data in Mali and Niger must be collected in French.

- Strong research capacity including rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis and data visualisation skills.
- Conducting research with children using interactive, child-friendly and participatory methodologies.
- Conducting research with persons with disabilities, including children: experience with the Washington Group methodology would be particularly appreciated.
- Conducting gender-sensitive research methods
- Experience of alternative forms of impact assessment is desired.
- Strong interactive presentation and workshop facilitation skills.
- Strong English reporting skills.
- Strong communication, inter-personal, people and team management skills to facilitate a smooth process of the evaluation.
- The team leader should have a minimum of 15 years of professional evaluation experience in programme/policy evaluation in education or international development, as well as oral and writing skills in English of the highest standard.
- A gender balanced team of international and national experts is strongly desired.
- Individual Experts can only be part of one proposal for these terms of reference.

D. Pricing (20%)

The budget should include all costs. Travel in-country and data collection in the field will be done by ASPIRE partners, and costs covered by ADRA Norway. The budget should provide details so that costs of expertise and other expenses are visible.

The budget should specify clearly how much the literacy and numeracy ACER, or EGRA/EGMA tests or similar and their analysis will cost, and bidders should be ready to accept a contract excluding this component.

The proposed payment schedule is:

- 20% at approval of inception report
- 40% at approval of draft evaluation report
- 40% at approval of final evaluation report

Annexes

Annex 1: ASPIRE Theory of Change

Annex 2: ASPIRE Results Framework

Annex 3: ASPIRE Uganda Results Framework