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Terms of Reference for to undertake Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for the Strengthening Agri-Entrepreneurship and Community Engagement Training in East, West and North Africa (AgriENGAGE) Consortium

1. Background

Africa is in a jobs crisis, by 2022 the continent was expected to have created at least 122 million jobs. But, sub-Saharan Africa could have only created about 54 million jobs with a bulk of these jobs are expected to come from entrepreneurship and growth of small medium enterprises (SMEs). Agricultural sector in Africa offers many opportunities that can be harnessed to move a mass of people out of poverty but only if requisite investment is made to harness the opportunities that exist in the agricultural value chains. The Strengthening Agri-Entrepreneurship and Community Engagement Training in East, West and North Africa (AgriENGAGE) project finds its relevance in the urgent need for agricultural growth and development to enhance food and nutritional security in Sub-Saharan Africa. The development of the agricultural sector will lead to improved livelihoods of over 80% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa. Investments in agriculture over the years have focused on increasing productivity, but there is a recognition that productivity increase alone had not enabled many farmers to take full advantage of the opportunities and the youth were ‘escaping’ out of agriculture as it did not resonate with their aspirations. Accordingly, there is a shift in focus from productivity increase to agribusiness led farming.

Moreover, in the new agriculture private entrepreneurs, including many smallholders, are linking markets for agricultural commodities. Embracing market-oriented agriculture may help reduce poverty among smallholders in the world. This changing face of agriculture requires smallholder farmers to shift their focus to commercialization of agriculture and hence require special skills and competencies to adapt their farming systems, diversify their production, make efficient use of resources and respond to changes in the agricultural environment. Accordingly, universities that train personnel need to shift from emphasis on provision of technical agricultural production knowledge, to understanding of functioning of markets and how markets can work for the poor as well as linking different stakeholders along the value chain. HEIs are struggling to meet the new demand for skills including in the number of people trained, quality of training programmes, and relevancy of skills offered.

The AgriENGAGE project brings a consortium of universities from East, West, and North Africa with partners in Europe and RUFORUM as a regional network body. The universities that make up the consortium include; Egerton University, Pwani University (Kenya); Uganda Martyrs University, Gulu University (Uganda), University of Abomey Calavi, National University of Agriculture (Benin), Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), and Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II (IAV) (Morocco). European partner universities include; University of Pavia (UNIPV) and University of Copenhagen.



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2. AgriENGAGE Purpose and Project objectives

AgriENGAGE aims at strengthening HEIs to provide excellent training programmes in Agripreneurship and Community Engagement responsive to evolving labour market demands to stimulating agricultural transformation and enhanced agricultural sector competitiveness. The specific objectives of the project are:

1. Availability of updated agripreneurial and Community Engagement Training programmes at HEIs
2. Enhanced teaching competences in business development services and community engagement in HEIs' academic staff
3. BSc. and MSc. students skilled in demand driven agripreneurship, agribusiness development services and community engagement
4. Enhanced collaboration between HEIs and industry

The AgriENGAGE project intends to up-scale the hands-on approach to agricultural science training through which the students leave the university with practical experience in working with farmers and industry. It builds on the extensive and successful experience of the University of Copenhagen in delivering innovation and entrepreneurship and building successful alliance with industry and communities (through innovative entrepreneurs' method approach). It also learns from the facilitative expertise of University of Pavia in delivering experiential learning and innovative pedagogies for the 21st century skills. AgriENGAGE will thrive in collaborative-experiential learning delivery and engagement through enhancing academic staff pedagogical competences that strengthens that application of constructivism and connectivism methodologies. This kind of training breaks away from the norm of theoretical training, producing students who can cope well in the job market as employers or employees and foster economic development.

The project intends to give short-term training to agricultural graduate students in community engagement and business skills that are currently lacking in the graduates of most agricultural programs. Having a curriculum that involves industry players in delivery besides exposing students to real experiences is a novel idea that can bridge the gap that currently exists between universities and the industry in most African countries. The student summer schools component will facilitate sharing of ideas, challenges and opportunities in agrienterprise amongst partners. The project has proposed farm attachment to link the students to the farmers such that there is cross learning and exposure to real farm problems and challenges. The idea of staff and students offering agribusiness development services to farmers exposes them to real problems and enables them to come up with innovative solutions that are realistic to the prevailing conditions. This is something that has often lacked in previous agricultural science curricula.



3. Purpose and Objectives of this Assignment

The European Union under the Erasmus+ programme has outlined the relevant thematic regional/national priorities. As part of the quality control and monitoring, a consultant to conduct mid project evaluation of the project. The AgriENGAGE project has arrived in its mid-project life cycle and the consortium now desires to source the services of such a consultant to support the consortium to under take the monitoring, evaluation and learning process.

The purpose of this assignment is to perform a mid-term project monitoring, evaluation and learning of the AgriENGAGE project with a view to assess progress, performance, achievements and lessons learned of the program, to date, and to use these to ensure that adjustments are made where necessary in order to realize maximum impact by the end of the project's lifespan. It is also to ensure that the reach and impact of the AgriENGAGE will be observable. This assignment is constructed around three broad objectives:

- i. **Learning and Improvement** as building blocks for present and future designs and implementation work. The outcomes of this mid-term review will provide useful and relevant information for optimizing the on-going work, explore to what extent implemented actions and interventions have been successful or unsuccessful, and provide guidance on how to better implement remaining and emerging work package activities of the project;
- ii. **Accountability:** this MEL is an accountability instrument for AgriENGAGE project. As such, it will be used to assess whether or not project plans have been, or are likely to be fulfilled, and also to determine the extent to which the project's resources have been used in a responsible and effective manner.
- iii. **Sustainability:** the outcomes of this MEL exercise should assist AgriENGAGE consortium to assess the sustainability (or otherwise) of the activities, approaches, and structures initiated or supported by the program.

Based on the above overarching objectives, the specific objectives of this MEL are to:

- i. Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation, including assessing the institutional arrangement, partnerships, risk management, M&E and project implementation;
- ii. Evaluate the outputs, and any outcomes of the project already delivered, and determine and assess their contribution to delivery of the overall project's overall aims and objectives;
- iii. Assess the extent to which the program is contributing to the transformation goal at individual, community, institutional, and sector levels, as well as other areas that may not have been previously envisioned in the design but have been impacted;
- iv. Determine the extent to which the project and its associated actions are relevant to the existing universities, and other partner organisations in which it is being implemented;
- v. Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the project set-up in terms of i) institutional anchorage within the Universities and within RUFORUM;
- vi. Identify key 'lessons learnt' and best practices to date, particularly with regards to strategic processes and mechanisms chosen to achieve the project's objectives to date,



- and;
- vii. Make clear, specific and implementable recommendations to improve implementation of the project's second half and provide guidance on how future interventions could be best delivered.

4. Scope of the Mid-Term Review

In line with the overarching objective and the specific objectives above, below, are some of the specific issues and/or questions that the consultant/s will be required to answer. They include:

a. Effectiveness

- i. Are the activities implemented in accordance with the project plans? If not, why?
- ii. What outputs have been achieved? To what extent do they contribute to the objectives of the project?
- iii. How effective are the approaches and structures in delivering the desired outputs? What is working well and how can it be optimized?
- iv. Do the partner universities and organisations work together effectively? How can the partnerships be improved?

b. Efficiency

- i. Are the available technical and financial resources adequate to fulfil the project plans¹?
- ii. Are the funds being spent in accordance with project plans and budget, and using the right procedures?
- iii. Do the partners undertake self-monitoring and assessment, reporting and reflection to inform programming and implementation?

c. Relevance

- i. Is the project design and approach relevant in addressing the identified needs, issues and challenges that were identified at the time of project design
- ii. Does the project have a transformative components to education² and potentially driving change within the universities
- iii. Is the project contributing to participating institutions/universities strategic priorities? How could relevance be improved in the future?

d. Sustainability

- i. Is the approach used likely to ensure a continued benefit after the end of the AgriENGAGE?
- ii. Are all key stakeholders sufficiently and effectively involved? Are their expectations met and are they satisfied (including students) with their level of participation?
- iii. Are alternative or additional measures needed and, if so, what is required to ensure continued sustainability and positive impact?

¹ If not, why? If yes what systems are in place that makes it work well?

² Transformative education is an education that empowers learners to see the social world differently and through an ethical lens, so that they are able to challenge and change the status quo as agents of change



5. Methodology and approach

The consultant/consulting firm is required to propose a comprehensive methodology for carrying out this assignment, bearing in mind a partnership approach. Consequently, the proposed methodology should be able to help respond to the questions raised. The methodology should provide a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches that will help document learnings so far achieved, which will help improve implementation going forward. The methodology should allow for wide consultations among all stakeholders including students. Consultants are free to propose innovative approaches and make a justification for their choice during the expression of interest and during the project inception report.

6. Expected deliverables

The consultant/team is expected to provide:

- i. **An inception report:** the inception report will provide details of the Consultant's understanding of the MEL exercise and how the MEL questions will be addressed. This is to ensure a shared understanding of the process and expectations between AgriENGAGE consortium and the Consultant. The inception report will include the evaluation matrix summarizing the review's design, methodology, evaluation questions, data sources and collection analysis tool for each data source and the measure by which each question will be evaluated. The report will include the scope of work, work plan, time frame. It will also include a proposed schedule of tasks; activities and deliverables, with clear responsibilities for each task or product. The inception report will be discussed and agreed upon before Effective commencement of the MEL assignment.
- ii. **A draft review report:** the consultant will prepare a draft MEL report taking into consideration the agreed upon format. The draft report, will be submitted to the RUFORUM Secretariat and will be reviewed by the consortium partners to ensure that the review process and outcomes meet the required quality criteria. The report should provide evidence-based recommendations for program strategy, policy direction and programmatic implementation. The Consultant will prepare a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the contents of the report and featuring findings and recommendations. It is preferable for the Consultant to present this in person at an agree date and time.
- iii. **A final report**
The final report will be submitted after input and validation workshop. The content and the structure of the report shall include an executive summary, a contextual background, a methodology section, a findings section, a robust analysis section, and an abridged version report for popular reading among decision makers (8 pages maximum).

7. Required expertise and qualification

RUFORUM recognizes that the scope of the MEL will demand multiple skill sets and knowledge and therefore, the Secretariat will hire the consultant/firm based on expertise, experience and affordability of the proposed cost of the assignment within the available budget as provided in the



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AgriENGAGE project provision. It is preferable that this assignment be undertaken by an individual/firm that is able to demonstrate the following:

- i. At least 10 years' experience in Higher Education management, policy and strategic implementation anchored in agriculture or related fields in Africa.
- ii. Extensive expertise, knowledge, and experience in multi-country evaluation of programmes in the agriculture and related sectors
- iii. At least 10 years of experience working with international organizations and donors in regional programme design, monitoring and evaluation
- iv. Experience in deploying mixed methods with a considerably good computational abilities and discerning lessons with evidence (consultant required to provide at least two verifiable references from previously undertaken assignments).
- v. Ability to provide reference materials that demonstrate the firm's past experience in undertaking similar assignments.

8. Management Arrangements

The selected consultants will report to the RUFORUM Secretariat designate(s) who will provide technical guidance for the review and ensure that the review process is independently conducted and the agreed processes are followed. The Consultant shall also have meeting sessions with all AgriENGAGE consortium partners.

9. Time-Frame for the Evaluation Process

This MEL will be conducted between the month of December 2023 to February, 2023. The choice of this time-frame is to allow the consultant ample time to undertake a comprehensive assessment as well as undertake the numerous visits and dialogue with the various stakeholders. Accordingly, the time frame and key activities will be developed by the consultant within the context of this broad time frame provided.

10. Payment

The payment for this task will be made by RUFORUM Secretariat on behalf of the AgriENGAGE Consortium. Payment will thus be based on a contract agreed upon RUFORUM, AgriENGAGE consortium and the consultant.

11. Administrative considerations

RUFORUM and Egerton University shall be responsible for all the other operational issues relating to coordination of the consortium partners. The Consultant shall agree with the Consortium on the schedule of activities.

12. Available Amount: Euro 6,000 (equivalent in US Dollars)



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13. How to apply

1. All applications with all the necessary and relevant supporting documents should be sent to secretariat@ruforum.org with copy to a.egeru@ruforum.org; and pshenga@egerton.ac.ke
2. Applications should contain the financial proposal for consideration
3. All applications should be submitted not later than 2nd December, 2023 at 23:59 Hours.