



Near East Foundation (NEF) - Syria

Request for Applications for Impact Assessment Consultant

CONTRACT DATA

Period of Performance: 20/12/2024 – 31/03/2025

Location of Assignment: Northeast Syria (with data collection in target project areas Hassakeh, Al Raqa and Deir El Zor governorates)

Advertisement date: 21/11/2024

Submission deadline: 08/12/2024

Background:

For over 100 years, the Near East Foundation (NEF) has worked to build more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive communities in the Middle East, Caucasus, and Africa through education, governance, and economic development initiatives. Working through a network of country offices and local partners, NEF has operations in ten countries: Armenia, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Mali, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria. Its programs are organized around three themes: Inclusive Economic Development, Climate-resilient Development, and Stabilization and Peacebuilding.

Since 2020, NEF, funded by the Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF), has implemented a Revolving Credit Fund (RCF) program in Northeast and Northwest Syria to support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and foster economic resilience. This initiative has been instrumental in promoting financial inclusion and sustainable livelihoods in the region, contributing to community empowerment, stability, and economic recovery.

As the final phase of the SRTF RCF program under NEF's leadership approaches its conclusion, this impact assessment will document and analyze NEF's journey, outcomes, and processes from inception through the current program. The study aims to produce a high-quality, publishable report that showcases the RCF's impact on the local economy, communities, and individuals, as well as NEF's adaptive management approach, effective processes, and achievements in advancing the RCF within challenging operational environments.

Assignment Overview

This assessment seeks to provide a holistic and evidence-based analysis of the RCF's impact in Northeast Syria, specifically evaluating the program's effectiveness in fostering financial inclusion, economic resilience, and local economic growth. The findings will support NEF's strategic planning, guide future RCF design for Siraj Financial Services—the microfinance institution established by NEF to lead in designing, implementing, and evaluating the financial services of upcoming RCFs in



northern Syria—strengthen fundraising efforts, and offer valuable insights for stakeholders interested in replicating the RCF model in similar contexts.

Objectives of the Impact Assessment

1. **Comprehensive Program Review**

Document NEF's journey from the establishment of the RCF to its current status. This includes examining initial challenges, program adaptations, and management practices that enabled the program's success.

2. **Evidence-Based Impact Documentation**

Measure the RCF's impact on MSMEs, local communities, and the economy. Key metrics include:

- Beneficiary perspectives on the program's impact.
- Economic indicators such as job creation and workforce development. Workforce development includes changes in skills, salaries, job formalization, and type of employment.
- Operational sustainability and social impact on local economies.
- Value for money and return on investment.
- Evaluate how MSME practices have adopted climate-responsive and resource-efficient solutions, particularly in agriculture and other resource-intensive sectors.
- Examine how financial stability through RCF affects mental well-being, empowerment, and resilience, potentially contributing to broader community stability.
- Business benefits beyond workforce development, such as improved business operations, enhanced products or services, and increased market access (e.g., new markets, clients, or segments).
- Measures undertaken by businesses to manage external shocks (e.g., conflicts, curfews, inflation, and climate impact).

3. **Challenge Analysis**

Identify challenges beneficiaries faced in accessing or utilizing the RCF effectively, including barriers to participation and inclusion, and analyze how these have influenced program success.

4. **Recommendations and Strategic Insights**

Offer actionable recommendations for enhancing the impact and design of future programs. Provide insights into correlating benefits derived separately from technical assistance versus financial assistance through case studies.

5. **Support for Fundraising and Communications**

Leverage findings to demonstrate the program's successes and to highlight the need for continued support, fostering engagement with funders and peer organizations. Analyze any business-to-business collaborations or improved relationships resulting from the program.



Scope of Work

The consultant is responsible for designing and conducting a comprehensive impact assessment, including both qualitative and quantitative research.

Research Methodology

The consultant should employ a mixed-methods approach to capture a thorough understanding of the RCF's impact. Methodology should include, but is not limited to:

1. **Desk Review**
Analyze existing project documentation, previous assessments, and learning studies related to the RCF program.
2. **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Groups**
Conduct interviews with project stakeholders, beneficiaries (sample size at least 150 participants), and other relevant participants across Northeast Syria.
3. **Surveys and Comparative Analysis**
Deploy surveys targeting RCF beneficiaries, specifically MSME owners, to gather insights into economic and social outcomes, program challenges, and satisfaction levels. Include comparative analysis with global best practices, similar programs, and case studies on technical and financial assistance impacts.
4. **Impact Indicators**
Quantitatively assess value for money, return on investment, financial portfolio performance, and other economic indicators to showcase impact.
5. **Beneficiary Perceptions**
Collect qualitative data on beneficiaries' perceptions to enrich the understanding of the program's effectiveness and social impact.

Expected Outputs and Deliverables

The consultant will deliver the following outputs under the supervision of the NEF Syria team and in close coordination with the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Manager:

1. **Inception Report**
 - A detailed work plan with a refined methodology and data collection tools, submitted within 15 days of contract start.
 - The inception report should outline plans for capturing additional data on workforce development, business-to-business collaborations, and measures to manage external shocks.
2. **Draft Report**
 - An initial, structured report including:
 - Quantitative and qualitative findings.



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- Lessons learned and actionable recommendations.
 - Analysis of how technical assistance and financial assistance contribute to the program's outcomes, with illustrative case studies.
3. **Presentation/Debriefing**
- A debriefing session presenting key findings, lessons learned, and recommendations to NEF staff.
 - Visual representations of business metrics improvements (e.g., market access, product quality, and operational efficiency) and workforce development outcomes.
4. **Final Report**
- A comprehensive and polished report in English, formatted for publication. The report should include:
 - Executive summary.
 - Background and context.
 - Methodology and approach.
 - Findings with visual data representation.
 - Comparative analysis with global benchmarks.
 - Sections specifically addressing workforce development, business metrics, and resilience strategies to manage external shocks.
 - Success stories/beneficiary profiles.
 - Conclusions and strategic recommendations.
5. **Data Package**
- Provide all collected data, including transcripts, survey data, and raw data sets.

Target Audience and Use of Findings

The primary audience includes NEF, SRTF, and peer organizations. The findings will:

- Support NEF's internal strategic planning.
- Showcase impact to funders.
- Provide insights on replicating the RCF model in fragile and conflict-affected regions, emphasizing resilience to external shocks and business-to-business collaboration.

Skills, Experience, and Selection Criteria

- Extensive experience in impact assessments, particularly in conflict or post-conflict areas.
- Proven ability to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Familiarity with MSME development and financial inclusion programs.
- Advanced skills in data analysis and visualization to effectively communicate impact metrics and insights.
- Experience analyzing workforce development, business metrics, and resilience strategies in fragile contexts.
- Proven ability to produce high-quality, publishable reports suitable for dissemination among funders and peer organizations.
- Strong understanding of Syria's socio-economic context.
- Fluency in Arabic and English.



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- Ability to conduct fieldwork in Northeast Syria.

Payment Structure

Payments will be distributed as follows:

- 35% upon submission of the inception report, including plans for addressing workforce development, business metrics, and external shock resilience.
- 50% upon submission of the draft report, incorporating analysis of technical vs. financial assistance contributions and case studies.
- 15% upon final report approval

Submission Requirements

Interested applicants should submit the following documents to <https://neareast.bamboohr.com/careers/427?source=aWQ9MTI%3D> :

- Cover letter highlighting relevant skills and experience.
- Up-to-date CV(s).
- Technical proposal (methodology, work plan, and timeline).
- Financial proposal.
- Samples of previous impact assessments.
- References.

Deadline: 08/12/2024

For additional background, applicants may visit the NEF website at www.neareast.org.