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| Terms of Reference  External evaluation midterm of *SPECIAL* project financed by *AFD*  South of Lebanon - Tyre  April 2024 |

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1. **Description of the action to be evaluated**

**Background**

Asmae-AssociationSoeur Emmanuelle ("Asmae") is a French international NGO and registered charity, specialising in child development. Independent, secular and apolitical, it is open to all. Founded in 1980 by Sister Emmanuelle, based on her experience with rag pickers in the slums of Cairo, Asmae continues its actions in line with the values and methods inherited from its founder: listening and proximity, pragmatism, taking account of differences, professionalism and reciprocity. Asmae's actions aims to support vulnerable children and their families through personalised and continuing support for local actors working in the fields of education and child protection.

Asmae has been working in Lebanon*,* among others, in partnership with Imam Sader Foundation (ISF) organisation which has established the “Strengthening Protective Early Childhood and Inclusion Approaches in Lebanon” (*SPECIAL)* project since *August 2022.*

Imam Al-Sadr Foundations (ISF) is a Lebanese, non-governmental, non-profit association, founded by Mr. Musa Al-Sadr, and began its activities in 1963 with the mission of striving towards an advanced society that believes in social justice, free from ignorance, poverty, disease and violence, and where opportunities are equal for all. The Imam al-Sadr Foundation strives, through its vision, to empower women, youth, and children to achieve self-reliance, and to build a safe and dignified life, based on the values of tolerance, justice, and mutual trust, through educational, rehabilitative, cultural, health, social, and economic programs.

Education is one of the cornerstones of the Foundation's ongoing development programmes: pre-school, primary education and specialized curricula designed for children with special needs. Moreover, the School of Nursing at Imam Sadr Institutions has enabled thousands of graduates to find gainful employment and thus become economically independent. One of its specialized projects is the Women's Economic Empowerment Program with Intensive Vocational Training Programme, as an approach to empowering women and improving the economic and social conditions of disadvantaged populations. Additionally, the organization's pioneering curriculum for mental health professionals is the first of its kind nationally and trains workers to effectively recognize mental disorders and provide mental health services in rural Southern communities.

The project, funded by The Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The Agence Française de Développement (AFD) Group funds, supports and accelerates the transitions to a fairer and more sustainable world. Focusing on climate, biodiversity, peace, education, urban development, health and governance, our teams carry out more than 4,200 projects in France’s overseas departments and territories and another 150 countries. In this way, we contribute to the commitment of France and French people to support the sustainable development goals.

This external evaluation[[1]](#footnote-1), sponsored by Asmae Lebanon, reflects a concern to to determine if the project design addresses the needs that were identified and to assess how well the project is being implemented to meet these needs.while taking into point the criteria of validity and efficiency of the project towards its beneficiaries.

**Project description**

The project will enable children to reach their full developmental potential, which in the long run will have many impacts at the individual and collective levels, particularly in terms of social cohesion. The project is also part of a continuum between the different educational levels – early childhood development and education (nursery and pre-primary school) to primary school entry (acquisition of prerequisite skills, support for children and parents for the enrolment in primary school). Furthermore, this project proposes a holistic collaborative approach, involving public and private service providers, relevant ministries, civil society and communities. This project is based on a strong partnership with the partner CSO, Imam Sadr Foundation, which, with the support of Asmae, will be responsible for the direct implementation of capacity building activities in 10 early childhood centres (nurseries and pre-primary schools) in the Tyre region, as well as parent support and community mobilisation. In a child rights-based approach, another key component will be to foster inclusive services, at the level of nurseries and pre-primary schools: through the review of educational programmes, through the training of the staff of the supported centres as well as through the provision of specialised support to children identified with special needs (related to disability, protection risks, gender discrimination, origin for refugees, etc). In addition, the project will promote sustainability by institutionalising a network of actors (directly involved in the project as well as other local and national actors) in order to promote quality inclusive initiatives in the long term.

**Duration of Project:** August 2022- August 2025

**Geographical area of the project:** Tyre- South of Lebanon

**Overall objective of the project:** To improve access to inclusive, quality early childhood services for girls and boys aged 0-6 years in order to improve their overall development, in South Lebanon

**Main Specific Objectives for the project:**

**SO.1.** To promote the overall development of 1200 girls and boys (0-6 years) through quality early childhood services and improved parenting skills

**SO.2** To promote inclusive services early childhood development and education, including

**Expected results per objective:**

**Result 1 (SO1):** 10 nurseries and kindergartens are strengthened to ensure quality services for early childhood development and education

**Result 2 (SO1):** 1,000 parents and guardians are supported in their educational role to foster a family environment conducive to child development

**Result 3 (SO2):** An inclusive approach is promoted at the level of communities, nurseries and pre-primary school centres

**Result 4 (SO2):** 120 children at risk are supported holistically through specialised and integrated services

**Justification of the evaluation**

Mid-term evaluations play a critical role in enhancing project effectiveness, efficiency, and impact by providing valuable insights, promoting learning and adaptation, and ensuring accountability and transparency throughout the project lifecycle.

The objectives of a mid-term evaluation include:

* Assessing Progress: Evaluate the extent to which the program has achieved its intended outcomes and objectives at the midway point.
* Identifying Challenges: Identify any challenges, barriers, or gaps that have emerged during program implementation, hindering progress towards the desired outcomes.
* Evaluating Strategies: Assess the effectiveness of program strategies and interventions in achieving desired outcomes, and identify areas for improvement.
* Feedback for Improvement: Provide actionable feedback and recommendations to improve program implementation, management, and impact for the rest of the program cycle.
* Stakeholder Engagement: Engage stakeholders in the evaluation process to ensure their perspectives are considered and to promote ownership and support for program improvements.

Overall, mid-term evaluations play a crucial role in ensuring that programs are on track to achieve their intended outcomes and in maximizing their impact on beneficiaries and communities.

**Description of the evaluation work**

The facts: establish an overall assessment of the project from its start

This will establish a comprehensive, objective assessment of project activities since its inception. This step should enable a precise and detailed knowledge of the project, its evolution and its context to be gained. For this purpose, it is necessary to:

* Gather and view all the information and documents relating to the project under evaluation, and study the logical framework [or restore it if it is not available] of the intervention (goal, specific objectives, outcomes, monitoring indicators and critical assumptions) in order to acquire a good knowledge of it. The documents to be consulted will be available from the following sources: [to be completed as appropriate].
* Interview those who are, or have been, involved in the design, management and supervision of the project.

**Evaluative analysis**

The project will be evaluated using the following criteria*[[2]](#footnote-2):*

* the pertinence of the project [The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners’ and donors’ policies];
* the effectiveness of the project [The extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance];
* the efficiency of the project [A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results];
* the impact of the project [Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended];

**Conclusions**

This will be to reach clearly explained conclusions (by type of action, actor, etc.) and describe the means used to arrive at these evaluative conclusions.

* What conclusions are deduced from the judgements?
* Do the conclusions clearly respond to the questions in the TORs?
* What were the strengths and weaknesses of the project?
* What are the causes of departures from what was expected?

**Recommendations**

Formulate realistic recommendations based on the results of the action and the analysis of the context of the project being evaluated. Recommendations should contribute to improving program performance In particular:

* Which conclusion(s) lead(s) to which recommendation(s)?
* How can the advantages (or strengths) of the project be consolidated?
* To what extent could the difficulties (or weaknesses) of the project be resolved?
* What is the priority order of the recommendations in line with their importance?
* What is the priority order of the recommendations in line with a draft timetable?
* Which are the strategic recommendations and which are those of an operational nature?
* What are the general lessons that can be learned?

Wherever possible, evaluators will assign each of the recommendations to the various stakeholders (technical services, partners, operators, general management, etc.), providing a schedule (short-, medium- and long-term), suggesting indicators for monitoring these recommendations.

**Lessons learned**

Draw more general conclusions that can be extended to other activities (sectoral, operational, technical, institutional or policy options, etc.) based on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation.

**Service to be provided**

**Skills required to conduct the evaluation**

The skills required for this evaluation are those of an interdisciplinary team of experts covering the following areas:

* Knowledge and similar experience in evaluation with other NGOs; and to include attachment and reference of any similar work done as midterm or final evaluations.
* Proven experience record on technical matters related to Early Childhood Development, Education/ MEHE, Inclusion, Gender, and Protection,
* Experience of the geographical area where the project is being implemented, South of Lebanon – Tyre.
* Adequate Arabic/English language skills

**Duration and timing of the evaluation**

The conditions for carrying out the study: Contract and Implementation of the study duration (30 days)

**Evaluation steering methods**

Monitoring the evaluation work will be carried out by an ad hoc steering committee, which will consist of members from both Asame and ISF staff membersand will meet and exchange views with the evaluators as needed.

*Members of the Steering Committee:*

***From Asmae:***

* *Malak Shmaissani: Projects and Partnership Manager*
* *Bassel Noureddine: Projects Coordinator*
* *Zahraa Gharib: Project Officer*
* *Fatima Noureddine: MEL Officer*

***From ISF:***

* *Rawiya Jouny: Project Officer*
* *Rouba Saroufin + Ghina Kassir: Technical Trainers*

A scoping meeting early in the evaluation and debriefing meeting on the final report will be organised with the participation of the steering committee and evaluators.

*Note: to take into consideration to keep the partners in the loop as experts within the children education sector and the approaches that will be conducted in the field during the implementation of the midterm evaluation.*

**Documents to be presented by the consultant(s)**

The technical proposal includes:

* An explanatory note regarding the terms of reference (2 pages) and a presentation of the methodology used (3 pages)
* References and experience for the consultant(s) (10 pages)
* The team's training, the allocation of responsibilities between its members and the CVs of the people that have been suggested for completing the evaluation
* A provisional timetable for the procedure and an estimate of the charges by person/day.

A financial offer with the overall budget (excluding and including tax) and detailed prices (fees, daily allowances, transport costs, etc.).

**Consultant selection process**

Technical proposals will be evaluated on the basis of their compliance with the terms of reference, with the following evaluation criteria:

* Consultant's references
* Understanding of the ToR and the proposed methodology
* The proposed team's qualifications, experience and coherence
* Financial proposal

**Deliverables**

1. **Progress report (*To plan if necessary)***

The evaluators will be asked for a progress report (or preliminary report). This should include:

* The progress report will certify a preliminary exploration of the document archives and present the interviews conducted;
* a definition of the methodology;
* a schedule of visits;
* an updated provisional timetable.

1. **Interim report**

The evaluators will deliver an interim report according to the schedule defined jointly with Asmae. This report will present the evaluators' entire work in accordance with the terms of reference. There will be a detailed analysis and comments by the sponsor and stakeholders.

1. **Final report**

Having considered any observations made by the steering committee, and requests for additional information and changes made by the sponsor, sometimes several times, the final report will be presented to Asmae.

1. **Summary of the final report**

Evaluators will be asked to write a summary and a presentation in PPT incorporating the following [3 to 10 pages maximum]:

* Reminder of the evaluation's objectives
* Presentation of the evaluation questions
* Presentation of the evaluation's conclusions and answers to the evaluation questions
* Presentation of recommendations
* Presentation of the lessons learnt

1. **Arrangements for forwarding the documents**

*Specify: for example, electronically or in paper format with X copies, etc.*

1. **Property of the report and confidentiality**

The external evaluation report is the property of the sponsor *[specify the sponsor: Asmae, partner, Asmae and partner, funder, etc.]*.

The external evaluator is subject to a confidentiality obligation concerning all the information and documents which may be brought to his or her attention in the exercise of his or her duty. He or she must protect the information collected and must not use it to gain any profit whatsoever.

1. **Notes**
2. An indicative list of documents to be consulted *[Ex. Proposal and project budget, preliminary study reports, documents produced in the framework of the partnership, etc.]*
3. An indicative list of people to meet
4. Outline of the report

*E.g.. Table of Contents for a final evaluation report.:*

* *summary*
* *abbreviations*
* *map*
* *summary of the report: 3 to 10 pages maximum*
* *brief summary of the objectives, context and challenges of the partnership*
* *reminder of the methodology*
* *amounts and breakdown of various categories of expenses incurred in the framework of the partnership*
* *description of the main stages of the partnership*
* *summary of the points mentioned under "Scope of the expected results of the evaluation"*
* *conclusions*
* *recommendations*
* *lessons to be learnt*
* *Attachments may include, among others:* 
  + *the terms of reference for the evaluation*
  + *the list of people met*
  + *the minutes of meetings and exchanges*
  + *the systems used for collecting information*

1. Evaluation of a development action carried out by entities and / or individuals outside the funding body and the organisation responsible for implementation (ref. OECD DAC Glossary of Key Terms in the evaluation). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Using the OECD's DAC glossary of key evaluation terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)