

Terms of Reference for a Feasibility Study

Consultancy to conduct a feasibility study for the project proposal "Contribute to transforming the food security and livelihood resilience of marginalized communities in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, supporting the achievement of SDG 2: Zero Hunger." in India to be financed jointly by Terre des Hommes Germany and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

1. About Terre des Hommes Germany

Terre Des Hommes Germany (hereafter **"TDH"**) is an International Children's Rights organization that promotes equitable development without racial, religious, political, cultural, or gender-based discrimination since 1967. Together with our local partner organizations in 37 countries, we support more than 240 projects in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. TDH is an independent non-governmental organisation that promotes civic engagement and the participation of children and youths in all aspects of its work. TDH sees its mission in strengthening children and realising children's rights for all children because every child has the right to live and to develop in the best possible way. At TDH, we are convinced that sustainable development is possible for all people if the interests of children and future generations are respected and realised.

2. About the project

India continues to face significant challenges related to poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly among children, women and socially marginalized communities. Around 194.6 million people in India are estimated to be undernourished, according to the FAO's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World estimates. Within these states, Siddharthnagar district in Uttar Pradesh and Nawada district in Bihar have been identified as aspirational districts by NITI Aayog due to poor indicators in poverty, health and nutrition. Poverty remains high, estimated at 40% in Siddharthnagar and 45% in Nawada. Child malnutrition is also widespread: stunting affects 45.6% of children in Siddharthnagar and 47.3% in Nawada, while 39% and 40% are underweight, respectively (NFHS-5). Anaemia further compounds these challenges, affecting around 68% of children in Uttar Pradesh and 69% in Bihar. Musahar communities in both districts face acute vulnerabilities due to deep-rooted caste discrimination, which limits their access to land, employment, public services and social networks. Their situation is often worse than reflected in district-level statistics. Women and adolescent girls experience chronic undernutrition, anaemia and stunting, compounded by low nutrition awareness, social exclusion and political marginalisation. Participation in Gram Sabhas and local governance remains below 10%, with limited involvement in planning and monitoring food and nutrition services, further restricting their voice, representation and decision-making power.

It is reported by the partner organization that the children from this community often face discrimination during the Midday Meal programme. Some children bring their

own dishes from home and are asked to sit and eat separately, showing deep social barriers in accessing government food services. There are also serious gaps in the local health and nutrition system. Children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) often cannot reach NRCs or PHCs due to long distances and the loss of their parents' daily wages. To meet the financial needs, agricultural pattern is also changing as diverse and nutritious crops have been replaced by monocropping focused on market sales. As a result, many families are left with very limited diets, often only rice and potatoes, while access to vegetables and other nutritious foods remains rare. At the same time, the emerging livelihood crisis due to landlessness, seasonal migration, limited livelihood opportunities has increased their vulnerability and further added to the lack of adequate food and malnutrition. While NFSA has significantly expanded access to subsidised food grains, its implementation remains largely centred on food distribution and nutrition support, with limited attention to structural determinants of food security such as land access, sustainable agriculture and livelihood resilience. A key gap in the implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) is that the focus remains mainly on food distribution and nutrition support, while broader livelihood-related issues are not addressed. In practice, the Act is largely limited to subsidised food grains, maternity benefits, and school meals, whereas issues such as access to land, support for agriculture, and decent livelihood opportunities receive limited attention. The project can bridge the gap between the current implementation of the NFSA Act and a more holistic interpretation of the Act by advocating for the formal inclusion of secure land leasing, agriculture initiatives, and decent livelihood opportunities within its operational policy framework.

Given these challenges, the proposed project will contribute to SDG 2 by improving food and nutrition security, strengthening local governance, and building community-led systems to monitor access to health, food and livelihood entitlements. It will support Musahar families with secure leased land, nutrition gardens, polyhouses, seed banks, small livestock and micro-enterprises, while strengthening youth livelihoods through village resource centres, skills training, FPO formation and market linkages. The project will also strengthen Musahar community participation in social and political discourse, collective action and local decision-making, enabling communities to raise their voices, claim their rights and influence decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods.

The project will build the capacities of 900 children, 900 youth, 900 CBMC members (80% women) and approximately 1,200 farmers organised through four Farmer Producer Organisations. It will strengthen two district-level and one state-level civil society networks for consultative stakeholders' engagement on food security, nutrition, livelihoods and entitlements. The project will directly reach out to 12000 families. Community-generated evidence on food security, nutrition, land access and livelihood barriers will inform stakeholder consultations aimed at strengthening policies and programmes under the National Food Security Act. Through combined action on livelihoods, entitlements, monitoring and youth engagement, the project

will strengthen the voice of marginalised Musahar communities, reaching 5,0000 community members indirectly through offline and online networks and campaigns. Implemented by SAFE SOCIETY and KOSHISH CHARITABLE TRUST in Siddharthnagar (UP) and Nawada (Bihar), the project will be carried out over 4 years and 3 months, from October 1, 2027 to April 30, 2031

Implementing partners: Together, KOSHISH and SAFE SOCIETY combine complementary expertise in food security, nutrition, livelihoods, child rights and stakeholder engagement. Their longstanding presence in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, experience working with Musahar communities, and involvement in Right to Food initiatives position them well to implement and scale the proposed intervention

3. Objective and Use of the Feasibility Study

The overall aim of the feasibility study is to investigate the project's contextual environment and its opportunities and risks in order to point out concrete recommendations for developing the project proposal, including objectives, strategies, measures, and activities. Therefore, the key objective of the study is an evaluation of the project's feasibility by **systematically shedding light on whether the proposed project concept and initiatives will support reaching the project's aims and objectives under the given circumstances and make recommendations for its improvement.** On this basis, TDH together with the partner organization(s) and all stakeholders involved may develop/adapt **the project proposal in order to increase the project's effectiveness, mitigate risks, and prevent unprofitable investments.**

Moreover, the feasibility study shall provide a strong basis for TDH, the partner organization(s), and other relevant stakeholders who will be affected by the project to expand and sharpen the focus on the **most relevant problems in the project area.** To do so, the feasibility study must consist of four sections of analysis: **1) a context and problem analysis, 2) an analysis of the local partner organization(s) and its (their) capacities to implement the proposed project, 3) an analysis of the project's target group(s) and other stakeholders affected by the project, 4) an assessment of the project regarding the OECD-DAC criteria** (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability). It will also be submitted to the BMZ as a part of the documents underlying the ministry's final decision-making about funding the project.

4. Research Questions

In the final report of the feasibility study, the consultant(s) must provide answers to the research questions listed for each field of analysis in the following subchapters: presenting a separate section for each of the four fields. However, the lists of research questions can be extended by the consultant(s). In order to avoid overlapping and

repetition of questions from sections one, two, and three with section four, questions that may cause such repetition are highlighted respectively in the lists. **It is the consultant(s)'s critical task to attribute the findings to the matching section in the final report during analysis.**

4.1 Context and problem analysis

With regard to the context and problem analysis, partners internal assessment and village profiles have been developed. The respective documents will be made available to the consultant and must be considered, the same analyzed data must be reviewed and verified on the ground and compare it with the actual situation.

Potential research questions	Relation to OECD-DAC criteria (if applicable)
What is the current situation in Siddharthnagar (Uttar Pradesh) and Nawada (Bihar) regarding food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and social marginalisation, particularly among Musahar communities? What is the current nutritional status of children, adolescents and women in the target communities, including prevalence of stunting, wasting, underweight and anaemia, and how should interventions respond to these findings?	Relevance
What is the socio-economic, political and cultural situation of Musahar and other Scheduled Caste communities in the project areas, including the total Musahar population and its distribution? To what extent do their needs and vulnerabilities justify the proposed project interventions?	Relevance
What alternative approaches, implementation modalities or partnerships could better address the identified needs and improve the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the proposed project?	Effectiveness Efficiency

4.2 Analysis of the local partner organization(s) and its (their) capacities

With regard to the analysis of the local partner organization and its capacities to conduct the proposed project, the TDH internal InA (institutional assessment), formerly known as QuaM, has been carried out in year 2025. The InA results can help answering the following questions, the respective documents will be made available to the consultant(s) and must be considered.

Potential research questions	Relation to OECD-DAC
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	criteria (if applicable)
Does the local partner(s) have the institutional, technical, staffing and financial capacity to implement the project? What key capacity gaps need to be addressed for effective and sustainable implementation?	Effectiveness
Which key policies, including child safeguarding, PSEAH and gender equality, are in place with the partner(s), and how are they reflected in the proposed project?	Coherence
To what extent do local partner(s) identify with the project (ownership) and are committed to making it a success?	Coherence
How can coordination between the local partner(s), Musahar communities and relevant stakeholders be strengthened to improve Musahar communities' access to services, entitlements, livelihoods and participation in local decision-making?	Relevance

4.3 Analysis of the target group(s) and involved stakeholders.

4.3.1 Assessment of the Target Group(s)

Potential research questions	Relation to OECD-DAC criteria (if applicable)
Are the proposed 30 communities comparable in terms of socio-economic status, caste composition, livelihood systems, land ownership patterns, and food security challenges to justify a common intervention model? If not, what differentiated strategies are required?	Relevance
How do social and political marginalisation and caste-based discrimination affect Musahar and other Scheduled Caste communities' access to services, entitlements and decision-making, and how should the project respond?	Effectiveness
What are the key needs, barriers and livelihood opportunities of Musahar and other target groups, and which interventions can sustainably strengthen their food security, dietary diversity and incomes? The study should analyse the extent of landlessness and land ownership among target households, including landholding sizes, and assess how these differences should shape livelihood strategies, food security measures, and project resource allocation.	Relevance

What is the target groups' potential for ownership, self-help and collective action, and how can the project strengthen it?	Impact
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4.3.2 Assessment of involved Stakeholders

Potential research questions	Relation to OECD-DAC criteria (if applicable)
Which key governmental and non-governmental actors, programmes and policy processes can contribute to improved food security, livelihoods and access to entitlements for Musahar and other marginalised communities, and what specific resources, services or policy influence can they provide?	External coherence
Do key stakeholders share a common understanding of the problems, their underlying causes and the proposed project objectives?	Internal coherence
How strong is stakeholders' support for improving food security among Musahar and other Scheduled Caste communities, and what influence, commitments or resources can they bring to the project?	Effectiveness

4.4 Assessment of the Project Proposal regarding the OECD-DAC Criteria

4.4.1 Relevance

The following (non-exhaustive) list of research questions supports assessing the extent to which the project's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries on global and country level, to partner(s)'s needs, to policies and priorities, and how they will continue to do so if circumstances change:

- Does the proposed project address the most pressing food security, nutrition, and livelihood needs and root causes of Musahar communities, particularly women, children, and youth, and how could the project design better respond to their needs and priorities?
- To what extent is the proposed district- and state-level policy stakeholders engagement relevant and feasible to improve food and nutrition security, livelihood opportunities, and accountability for Musahar and other marginalised communities?

Are the proposed project objectives, targets, and indicators, including those related to dietary diversity, livelihood improvement, community participation, and policy influence, appropriate and relevant to the realities of the target communities? Make suggestions for the elements of the results matrix which require revision or strengthening to improve feasibility, effectiveness and measurable impact.

4.4.2 Coherence

- a) The following (non-exhaustive) list of research questions supports assessing the compatibility of the project with other interventions carried out by the partner organization in the Education for children of migrant workers in all the proposed project areas. Internal coherence
 - How well does the proposed project aligns with TDH's Regional Theme: "Food Sovereignty?"
 - In what ways the project design align with the objectives, strategies, roles and capacities of the local project partners? How can this be improved?
- b) External coherence
 - How well does the proposed project aligns with the Right to Food Act, National food Security Act (NFSA) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and does it complement existing government efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition, especially for Musahar communities?
 - Which opportunities and challenges exist for collaboration with government departments, civil society networks, Farmer Producer Organizations and other stakeholders?

4.4.3 Effectiveness

The following (non-exhaustive) list of research questions supports assessing the extent to which the project is expected to achieve its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups:

- Are the proposed quantitative targets, such as improvement in household dietary diversity, livelihood gains for 1,200 families, functioning FPOs, and increased participation of Musahar women, realistic and achievable within the project period? What pre-conditions and additional measures, if any, are needed to improve their effectiveness and sustainability?
- What will be the most relevant and effective input measures to strengthen community and institutional capacities, improve NFSA implementation, and strengthen CSO networks for effective policy dialogue and influence?
- Which livelihood interventions are feasible for landless households and which are feasible for households with access to land?

What is the current production potential, market readiness and anticipated participation of Musahar and other target households, including landless households, for collective livelihood structures such as FIGs and FPOs?

4.4.4 Efficiency

The following (non-exhaustive) list of research questions supports assessing the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely manner:

- Is the relationship between the planned resources and the expected results, objectives, and impact appropriate and realistic?
- Are the overall project duration and the timeline adequate/realistic to implement all project measures to achieve the outputs and outcome?

4.4.5 Impact

The following (non-exhaustive) list of research questions supports assessing the extent to which the intervention is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects:

- What long term impact the project is likely to bring in to improve household food security, livelihoods, and access to entitlements, and can its approaches be replicated or scaled up?
- (How) will the project contribute to crosscutting issues such as gender equality, child participation, and child safeguarding in the intervention countries?

How might the project contribute to reducing caste-based discrimination and strengthening the participation and leadership of Musahar women, youth, and community institutions in local governance processes? What positive or negative unintended effects could arise from proposed interventions such as livelihood promotion, FPO formation, and community participation mechanisms?

4.4.6 Sustainability

The following (non-exhaustive) list of research questions supports assessing the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue:

- To what extent are the project results and impacts likely to be sustained through strengthened community-based monitoring systems, livelihoods, local institutions, and policy mechanisms beyond the project period?
- To what extent are the project outputs likely to be sustained and continue contributing to the intended results beyond the project period?
- Which measures and mechanisms are most effective in strengthening local ownership, participation, initiative, and capacities to sustain project results?
- Which socio-cultural and political barriers and key risks could hinder achievement of the project objectives, and what measures are needed to mitigate them?

5. Methodology

Methodology

In order to respond to the questions above, the consultant(s) is (are) expected to conduct both a **desk study** and **field work in the proposed intervention areas** applying both qualitative and quantitative methods to create a holistic understanding

of the proposed project and its feasibility. The methodology must be **participatory**, including particularly the project's potential beneficiaries (currently and in future), and paying particular attention to children's and youths' perspective regarding the project's activities, results, and objectives. Further, the methodology must be **child friendly** and **gender sensitive** and consider the project's **cultural contextual environment**.

Methods

Accordingly, the consultant(s) is (are) expected to apply combination of following methods when conducting the feasibility study:

- A desk study, i. e., an analysis of the project's background documents, including, but not limited to,
 - matrix and concept note
 - results of TDH internal InA
 - policies and strategies
- Key informant interviews
- Focus group discussion(s) with relevant stakeholders
- Mental mapping with relevant stakeholders
- Individual interviews with local beneficiaries
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (with problem and solution tree)

6. Key deliverables

The services to be carried out as part of the outlined study comprise the following assignments:

a) Preparatory meeting with TDH, represented by Coordination office, Country/Zone and local project partners

- Background: Jointly make the final decision about methodology and research process

b) Desk study

- Background: Familiarize with explicit knowledge relevant to the assignment
- Analysis of reports, policies, strategy papers, and other literature

c) Fieldwork

- 7 days of fieldwork in Siddharthnagar and Nawada in UP and Bihar based on methodology and methods defined in the previous chapter.

d) Follow-up workshop

- Background: Share findings and recommendations and jointly discuss how to integrate them into project planning (online)

e) Draft report

- Background: First draft report along with matrix (logframe) to be shared and commented on by TDH and local partner organization.

f) Final Report of the Feasibility Study in English (of no more than 20 pages, excluding annexes), consisting of

- An executive summary of no more than 2 pages in English
- A project description
- A description of the study's methodology
- A context and problem analysis
- An analysis of the local partner organization
- An analysis of the target group(s) and other relevant stakeholders
- An assessment of the project proposal regarding the OECD-DAC criteria
- Recommendations for developing/improving the project proposal.
- Concluding remarks
- Annexes, which may include a stakeholder analysis, matrix (log, a list of people interviewed, key documents consulted, transcripts of interviews, raw data of questionnaires, signed data protection agreements of all participants.

7. Tasks, Responsibilities, and Timeline

The TDH head office in Germany (hereafter head office) is generally in charge of the tender process and the selection of the consultant(s). Additionally, the head office will offer guidance to and/or accompany the consultant(s). The zonal/country offices in India (hereafter country office) both assist the tender process and the selection of the consultant(s).

The feasibility study is managed directly by the **Zonal Office / Coordination Office** in close consultation with the desk officer responsible at the head office and the local project partner(s). The local partner organization(s) actively participate(s) in the selection process of consultant(s).

The following table defines all tasks related to the feasibility study, including key deliverables and outputs, assigns respective duties to responsible stakeholders, particularly the consultant(s), and specifies the timeline of the study. As outlined in the table's last column, all services must be carried out from **10th September to 30th October 2026**.

Task(s)		Deliverables/Output	Responsible Stakeholders	Deadline/ Timeline
Preparation				
Tender		---	Country/Zone and Coordination Office	10/09/2026
Selection of shortlisted candidate(s) & awarding of contract(s)		Contract(s)	Country/Zone and Coordination Office	18/09/2026
Line-up of research team		---	Consultant(s)	
Preparatory meeting		Minutes of the meeting	Consultant(s)	22/09/2026
			Country/Zone and Coordination Office	
Desk study	Conduct investigation according to specifications in chapters 4 & 5	---	Consultant(s)	
	Provision of necessary project documents, including InA & other relevant study results if available	Files & documents	Local project partner(s)	24/09/2026
			Country/Zone	
Field work			Consultant(s)	
		---	Local project partner(s)	1 week
			Regional office	
			Head office	

Follow-up Workshop

Presentation of findings of desk study and field visits	Invitation to all potential participants (partners, staff of north zone and coordination office	Consultant(s)	14.10.2026
Report Writing			
Submission of draft report	Draft report according to specifications in chapter 6	Consultant(s)	20.10.2026
Feedback on draft report (If required comments on second draft should also be incorporated)	Written statement (1 to 2 pages)	Local project partner(s)	30/10/2026
		Country/Zone	
		Coordination Office	
		Head office	
Submission of final report	Final report according to specifications in chapter 6	Consultant(s)	02/11/2026
Approval of final report	---	Country/Zone	08/11/2026
		Coordination Office	
		Head office	

8. Requirements for bidders

- Proven experience with feasibility studies or evaluations in the field of Sustainable Development from a Child Rights, Education and Nutrition perspective.
- Experience of conducting feasibility studies or evaluations and research using a mixed methods approach, including participatory and child sensitive methods
- University degree in the field of sociology/ social work research and quality requirements for projects funded by the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- Profound knowledge and experience with the socio-economic situation on under-resourced communities in the state of UP and Bihar
- Very good oral and written proficiency in English and Hindi
- Compliance with TDH's Child Protection Policy (attachment No 1)

9. Specification for offers

Offers will be accepted until **10.09.2026** and should include:

- A narrative/technical proposal of no more than 3 pages, including relevant experience, planned methodology, timeline, and staffing for the feasibility study
- A detailed financial proposal for the feasibility study
- A separate list of travel expenses, which will be reimbursed upon presentation of proof
- Two sample reports; published or unpublished reports approved by the respective clients focusing on the same sector

Attachments:

- 1) TDH Child Safeguarding Policy