

Research Assistant-Short Term

Terms of Reference (ToR)

A. Summary

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| Job Title | Research Assistant |
| Project Title | Scoping Study for Inclusive Livelihoods Programme in Maharashtra |
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To assist the Study Team in scoping, identifying and analyzing the current socio-economic status and structural factors influencing the ultra-poor landscape, across 2 districts in Maharashtra- To undertake secondary research and PRA- To collate and consolidate primary and secondary data- To assist in draft report writing |
| Location | Maharashtra |
| Duration | 2 months |
| Start Date | 1 May 2024 |
| End Date | 1 July 2024 |
| Reporting to | Study Lead |
| Languages Required | Fluent Hindi & English. Proficiency in spoken Marathi preferable. |

B. Project Description / Background

With a developing country as diverse and complex as India, comes challenges which are multidimensional-the biggest one being poverty. The statistics is extremely concerning with 270 million of its people (1.38 billion) living in extreme poverty, out of which 65 million have been given the status of 'ultra-poor' which forms the least earning and most vulnerable section of the population. With changing physical and social landscape every turn of the road, the face of this poverty also changes with new questions standing against us, and obstacles unique to every state, district and town. The ultra-poor are faced with a plethora of nuanced problems such as food security, poor health and sanitation, social stigma, limited skills, assets or savings, tackling all of which requires a multi-faceted methodology which needs to be holistic as well as contextual in its intervention. The benefits from many development solutions in the past have either failed at trickling down to the poorest of the poor or have fallen short in the face of crisis, unable to eventually break their poverty trap.

BRAC is one of the world's largest development organizations, dedicated to empowering people living in poverty. Working across 12 countries in South Asia and Africa, BRAC touches the lives of more than 120 million people worldwide. BRAC takes a holistic approach to alleviating poverty through their Ultra Poor Graduation Initiative (UPGI) with programs that include microfinance, education, healthcare, food security programs and more. Graduation approach targeting the ultra-poor has been known to address their multidimensional needs within the local context and lift them from extreme poverty into sustainable livelihoods and a better standard of living. So far, this approach, which was pioneered in Bangladesh in 2002, has impacted over **2.1 million** Bangladeshi households totaling over **9 million** people and has been adapted by stakeholders across the globe. There are 8 other countries where BRAC has piloted or scaled Graduation programs and 11 countries where it has provided technical assistance to government and other NGOs. There are now more than 100 programs in nearly 50 countries implemented by NGOs, governments and multilateral institutions.

Both ACCESS and BRAC UPGI are committed to supporting the policy and ultra-poor programs landscape in India so that central and state governments as well as civil society organizations can locally learn from and adapt Graduation program approaches that have a higher potential to address the multi-faceted constraints affecting populations living in extreme poverty. The partnership aims to engage on issues for the empowerment of poor communities to escape extreme poverty, learning from the highly successful UPGI, through a set of initiatives designed to raise awareness and engage with stakeholders to facilitate cross learning on successful ultra-poor programs and experiences.

The Ministry of Rural Development's National Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (NRLPS) signed an MoU with BRAC International, formalising their shared commitment to holistic economic inclusion and social protection for people living in extreme poverty, particularly women. This MoU envisions a path-breaking strategy to reach out to the poorest of the poor and excluded households, incorporating a time-bound investment in the Graduation approach for more inclusive livelihoods across rural India.

In this endeavor, ACCESS Development Services is undertaking a scoping study on Extremely Poor Households in Maharashtra in association with the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM). The study will inform the process of designing a comprehensive and contextualized 'Inclusive Livelihoods Programme' for the most marginalized and vulnerable households, particularly women out of extreme poverty by understanding their current situation including indicators for identifying the ultra-poor, their potential/existing skills, their needs and prevailing and potential livelihood options.

C. Study Objectives

- ❖ Understand the current socio-economic status and structural factors that reinforce poverty among the extreme-poor vulnerable households, particularly women, in Maharashtra
- ❖ Assess the prevailing livelihood opportunities and package of services available to the poorest of the poor in the state
- ❖ Gain insight into the support extended so far by the SRLM and other relevant programmes in supporting them towards addressing their extreme vulnerabilities and providing livelihoods opportunities
- ❖ Assess the current status and strengths of community institutions and financial and banking ecosystems in supporting the extreme poor households of the state
- ❖ Identify and analyze potential points of convergence between various government agencies and line departments for an extended outreach of existing schemes under DAY-NRLM and for an effective and streamlined delivery of the inclusive livelihoods programme
- ❖ Identify any new challenges faced by the extreme-poor as a result of climate change, Covid-19 pandemic and other economic and social shocks along with their adaptive strategies to face the same
- ❖ Understand and map the landscape of exclusion around access to sustainable livelihoods and access to basic services such as education, water, health and sanitation disaggregated by sex, age and income for the poorest communities in the state
- ❖ Propose potential criteria for targeting extremely poor households, viable livelihood options for the target households and recommend on a structure for selecting these households
- ❖ Support MSRLM in designing an Inclusive Livelihoods Programme proposal to DAY-NRLM adapted for the extreme-poor in Maharashtra including customized indicators for the identification of the poorest and most vulnerable households

D. Scope of Work & Outputs / Expected Deliverables

1. Assist the Study Lead and ACCESS UPGI team in secondary research/data collection for each of the two selected districts in Maharashtra for the study, i.e., Nashik and Nandurbar
2. Assist the Study Lead in designing research and data collection tools for the study with the objective of understanding the livelihoods profile, assets, access to schemes and entitlements etc. of extreme poor households in the state
3. Undertake PRA in 2 blocks in each of the 2 districts with a representative sample of women, men and youth groups
4. Organize and conduct focused-group discussions (FGDs)/consultations with key stakeholders at village level
5. Assist in data sourcing, data tabulation, analysis, preparation of charts and graphs and identifying major highlights from the data as required by the Study Lead and ACCESS UPGI team
6. Undertake secondary research for the study and report
7. Follow the latest updates, articles and trends on extreme poverty in the state and forward the materials along with key bulleted highlights to the State Lead and ACCESS UPGI team
8. Collate and consolidate primary and secondary data for the report
9. Assist in draft report writing
10. Any other research assistance required by the Study Lead and ACCESS UPGI team

E. Qualification & Experience Required

- A Master's Degree in Social Sciences, or relevant discipline
- 1-2 years of professional experience in the field of Social Sciences with in interest in understanding rural poverty and livelihood landscape
- Fluency in Hindi & English languages. Proficiency in spoken Marathi is preferred.
- Proficiency in MS Office
- Excellent communication and writing skills
- Capacity to analyze an important quantity of information and to extract key issues relevant to the assignment
- Flexible and willing to travel as required
- Ability to work independently with a high degree of responsibility, in a flexible manner