

Terms of Reference for Conducting Information Ecosystem Assessments under the SPREAD Project (Kenya and South Sudan)

Background

The countries of Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia share common borders that are characterized by complex socio-economic, political, and environmental challenges. In response to these challenges, DCA in partnership with Saferworld, SAPCONE, ROG, ICPDO, ECC and APAD will be implementing the European Union funded “Strengthening integrated Peace, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction for cross-border communities in the Karamoja Cluster” (herein referred to as Borderlands) project.

Working closely with pastoralists/agro-pastoralists, fisherfolk, women and youth-led CSOs, traditional leaders, local/national authorities and the private sector, the project aims at enhancing effectiveness of conflict prevention and mitigation, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and management and resilience-building in cross border communities in the border region of the Karamoja Cluster (S. Omo/ Ethiopia, Turkana /Kenya and Eastern Equatoria/ S. Sudan).

The duration of the project is 1st February 2024 to 31st January 2027. The project goal will be achieved through strengthening community structures; promoting local/inclusive initiatives that reflect local interests/needs coupled with connections to broader structures (regional/national/international), climate responsive and resilience building measures, trade and market support and seeking to manage cross-border conflict reflecting local priorities with strong participation in advocacy that mitigates cross-border conflict. A comprehensive baseline survey is essential to understand the current context and inform implementation of the Borderlands project.

Purpose

The SPREAD: Peace & Resilience consortium will conduct inception assessments (hereafter ‘the studies’) which will comprise of three analysis products, namely:

- a) Mapping of Peace Infrastructure
- b) Gender Sensitive Conflict Analysis
- c) Community Security Assessments
- d) Information Ecosystems assessment

These will be used to inform a review and potential reconfiguration of intervention activities (activity 1.1.5) to ensure subsequent activities are tailored to respond to dynamic conflict drivers, gender drivers and shifting needs of target groups.

This TOR addresses the studies that will focus on Kenya and South Sudan implementation area of the cluster. Specifically, it will focus in **Kenya** Turkana County, specifically: Lokichogio sub-country, Turkana North and Kibish sub-counties, and the following in **South Sudan**-Eastern Equatorial, Budi, Kapoeta South and Kapoeta East

This TOR focuses on the information ecosystem.

We are seeking a suitable consultant to conduct the information ecosystem mapping. This will be conducted independently from but in coordination with the other studies. Its specific purpose and content will be as follows:

Mapping of Information Ecosystem

An information ecosystem assessment identifies the technological, socio-cultural and political dimensions of how information is disseminated, accessed and used as well as describing people's information needs and the impacts of information flows (and/or lack of information).¹ The SPREAD: Peace and Resilience project's interest is on how the information ecosystem effects both livelihoods and conflict dynamics.

The analysis should describe the overall information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, identify who has access to which technologies, which platforms are used, levels of literacy, including digital literacy, barriers to accessing information (for specific groups), patterns and cultures of information dissemination, consumption and technology use, and issues related to surveillance, oppression, control and restrictions on communications.

The analysis will help the consortium determine practically, amongst other things:

- How most effectively to communicate with resident populations of different ages, genders, ethnicities, socio-economic status and with relevant government authorities.
- How to facilitate enhanced communication, including across internal and international borders, between different communities, between communities and authorities, and between different authorities.
- How to manage information security risks associated with project implementation

The analysis should address the following themes:

Information Landscape

- What information networks (e.g. telephone, radio, television social media, and print and electronic media etc.) are present, and what is their coverage and availability?
- Which locations are covered by which networks?

Dynamics of information access

- Through which types of media, platforms and channels do which people access and disseminate which types of information?
- How do gender dynamics influence the availability and utilization of different communication channels?
- Which channels are used specifically in relation to: a) conflict, b) livelihoods and c) natural resource management
- What are people's habits and routines in terms of how they access and disseminate information?
- How can communication strategies be tailored to ensure that information is accessible and relevant to all genders?
- What are the differences between how people of different ages, genders, ethnicities, PWDs and socio-economic groups access and disseminate information?
- How do political, geographic, and socioeconomic factors (including languages spoken and literacy levels) affect different peoples' access to information and their ability to communicate?

Social trust and information consumption

- Which sources of information do different groups trust or distrust and why?

¹ Adapted from <https://howtobuildup.org/community-learning/topic/technology-context-factors> see also <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/mapping-information-ecosystems-support-resilience> and https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Internews_Information_Ecosystem_Assessments.pdf

- Which sources of information, individuals, groups, or institutions are particularly influential with whom?
- In what formats (whether video, image, audio, text, or other) do different groups and genders find the information most useful and accessible?
- When and how do they seek to verify or corroborate information?
- How does gender impact trust in various sources of information and communication channels?
- Are there gender differences in perceptions of credibility and reliability of information sources?

Existing and desired **patterns of communication** between government and resident populations, including but not exclusively to conflict, livelihoods and natural resource management

- To what extent and in which ways is communication occurring within and between different communities, including across borders, in relation to conflict and security, livelihoods and natural resource management?
- To what extent and in which ways are government authorities (at which levels) from the different countries communicating with each other across borders and discussing issues and sharing information in relation to conflict and security, livelihoods and natural resource management or other issues?
- In which ways have authorities and other actors in the cluster communicated or solicited information about policies, laws, and government initiatives with the public (whether about conflict and security, livelihoods, natural resource management or other issue, e.g. health)? What has been effective or ineffective about these approaches? What have been examples and the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful communications initiatives in the context?
- In which ways have resident populations previously voiced their perspectives to government authorities? Who has been involved, what have their experiences been of this, and what were the consequences? In which ways and to what extent have populations associated with one country been able to engage with authorities of another country?
- What are resident populations' and government authorities' desires and expectations about how they could communicate with one another?
- What do/might authorities and resident populations hope to achieve by communicating with each other within and across the borders?

Information needs and demand related to conflict and security, livelihoods and natural resource management.

- What information do resident populations and government authorities need or want in relation to conflict and security, livelihoods and natural resource management and to what extent are they able to access it?
- How do information demand and needs vary (e.g. between different groups, locations, ages, genders, culture, etc.)?
- What information do different groups want to be known by other groups?

Recommendations will be produced drawing on the answers of the above questions to inform activity design, operational implementation and risk management including

- How most effectively to communicate with resident populations of different ages, genders, ethnicities, socio-economic status and with relevant government.
- How best to facilitate enhanced communication, including across borders, between different communities, between communities and authorities, and between different authorities.

- How to manage information security risks associated with project implementation for example if there are any gender-specific vulnerabilities or concerns related to information security that need to be addressed
- Other recommendations drawn from the research findings

The methodological approach of the research:

The consultant is expected to employ a mix of methodological approaches that comprises:

Desktop/Literature review

1. A desk review of available literature and data to assess existing evidence. This will include materials already collated by Saferworld in addition to materials identified by the consultant.
2. It is expected that the desk review, in addition to further discussions with Saferworld will inform the development of the final field research plan and help identify themes and issues to explore in the primary research.
3. The consultant is to triangulate data from multiple sources in order to develop a comprehensive preliminary/inception report

Primary data collection

The consultant can propose a suitable methodology. Methods may include key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies from different locations (the research methodology to be agreed on discussion with Saferworld). Research participants should include Saferworld partners, representatives of civil society organisations, women and youth groups and activists, relevant government officials, security apparatus and justice providers, representatives from relevant INGOs and possibly UN agencies, regional bodies, and any other relevant persons/institutions at national, sub-national or international level.

Analysis and synthesis

The output should convey findings specific to each location as well as findings about cross-border and overall dynamics across the project area.

Reporting and Deliverables

During the term of the assignment, the consultant will:

1. Produce a preliminary desk review report to inform the primary field research methodology and aims.
2. Develop a work plan detailing expected timeframes, budget, methodological approaches, security and ethical considerations, and data collection tools that will be used in each planned activity.
3. Conduct coordination and consultation meetings with Saferworld staff, partners, and other recommended interlocutors including a feedback and review meeting to review drafts and develop relevant recommendations.
4. Produce the information ecosystem assessment output in a maximum 40 pages excluding recommendations, annexes, and references. Include matrices and maps to help effectively communicate the findings
5. A 4-page summary of the main findings/key points.

Quality delivery

Saferworld expects the consultant to produce reports that meet the highest level of standard to inform project implementation and dissemination. The consultant is also expected to produce a practical report that is devoid of plagiarism and false data/information.

Ethics and security

It is expected that the lead researcher/research team will, in consultation with Saferworld, inform relevant authorities in the research areas, take due consideration of the safety concerns of researchers as well as participants. It is expected that this will include consideration of how gender dimensions will be incorporated into the research.

Practical measures should include the following:

- Ensuring all research team members are properly trained and are aware of ethical considerations and their importance, including gender-specific considerations.
- Ensuring the physical and mental health and safety of all staff and external people involved in the research process to ensure staff well-being.
- Research teams should include men and women in equal numbers, where possible. When research questions include sensitive issues, such as gender-based violence, teams should take additional steps to ensure that women interviewers and interpreters are available and are the default option for interviewing women and men also have the option to be interviewed by women in places where high levels of sexual violence are suspected.
- Ensuring all phases of the project have the approval and backing of relevant authorities and the backing of key local-level leaders, both formal and informal (unless in exceptional circumstances).
- Ensuring respondents are aware of the research aims, the potential risks, and of the need to consent to participating in writing or orally (written consent may be viewed as a risk by respondents), and informing respondents that they are free to withdraw consent at any point (see Saferworld's guidance on informed consent).
- Seek additional permission before photos or recordings are taken.
- Agree how data will be managed and stored with the research team beforehand. Clearly state to participants how long the data will be retained, who will have access to it, and how or if it will be destroyed after the research is complete. Consider the safety of participants when deciding how data will be shared or disseminated. What are the implications of sharing data with communities and/or what are the risks associated with sharing data publicly more widely?
- Ensuring that resources and protocols are in place for referring beneficiaries/respondents who require such services – including gender-based violence survivors -to relevant legal, medical or psycho-social services in case such a need arises over the course of the research.
- Ensuring the anonymity of research subjects where necessary, including when researching people's experiences of violence. This includes providing confidentiality to respondents by systematically anonymising and encrypting interview data.
- Any discussions on sensitive issues will be carried out in safe spaces, in a manner that will not draw attention to the respondent.
- Ensuring that respondents with disabilities are able to participate in the research in a manner that takes their particular needs into account.
- Discuss in advance the implications of providing material or monetary compensation to participants. Consider whether provisions of incentives might lead to tensions in the community or put the integrity of both the research and/or the broader programme into question in the eyes of community members.

To ensure that our research and analysis processes are inclusive the lead researcher should:

- Aim for gender equality in the research team including research design, management, data collection and workshop facilitation, and analysis (this means having an equal number of and equivalent roles for women and men)

- Interview women and hold women-only focus group discussions, in which no men are present, using women only facilitators for these groups. This principle should also apply to groups of different ages and to the inclusion of other groups that might be marginalised (such as people with disabilities or minority ethnic groups).
- Plan the timing and location of activities in a way that will not inconvenience participants and will not expose them to danger, and be aware of different participant's needs; for example, for those with child-care roles, consult intended research participants about how best to accommodate them in advance of the interview, discussion or workshop.
- Provide the financial or logistical means necessary for participants to attend so that they do not incur expenses or lose income.
- Share the initial findings of the analysis with research participants for validation and to confirm that our analysis reflects their reality.

Timeframe of the consultancy

Final research outputs must be completed not later than 15 August 2024. The consultant/s is/are expected to submit a proposal including a timeframe and work plan indicating the number of working days needed to conduct the research, in addition to drafting and reviewing the outputs (including the number of days needed for Saferworld's feedback):

- The final report must be submitted to Saferworld by 15 August 2024
- Deadlines for interim submissions (e.g. draft report) will be agreed in consultation with the selected applicant and included in the consultancy contract.

Compensation & Expenses

Saferworld will compensate the consultant in instalments upon completion of the following milestones: Milestone	Percentage
Submission of research plan and methodology	40%
Submission of the first draft of the report	10%
Submission of a second draft report	10%
Submission of the final report	40%

Payment will be made based on a satisfactory output delivered rather than the number of days worked. The consultant will be compensated for costs associated with conducting the research task, including per diem, transport and accommodation, as outlined in the agreed budget. Each cost will be agreed in advance with Saferworld and form part of the instalment payments.

Confidentiality and publication of materials

Saferworld will retain the right to edit the final draft prior to publication and will have copyright over the publication and data collected during the research.

Required skills and competencies

- Proven understanding of information ecosystems and the interaction between information flows and conflict.
- Experience conducting information ecosystem assessments.
- Considerable and proven knowledge and understanding of gender, conflict, security, livelihoods and environmental issues in the border lands of Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia
- Demonstrable knowledge and proven experience of gender and conflict sensitivity approaches.

- Proven experience and previous consultancy work on similar research in conflict affected settings.
- Proven experience coordinating a complex research process across multiple locations in different countries
- Proven ability to access data and information and strong relevant networks.
- Ability to write succinct, high-quality reports in excellent English.
- Availability to complete the assignment within the designated timeframe.

How to Apply

Interested consultants are expected to submit their technical and financial proposal to Saferworld via jobs@saferworld-global.org by 24 July 2024.