



## **Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP)**



### **ENPARD II Final Evaluation**

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## List of Acronyms

CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
EC	European Commission
ENPARD	European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
EU	European Union
ELARD	European LEADER Association for Rural Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GALAG	Georgian Association of Local Action Groups
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development
LA	Local Authority
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	A European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalize rural areas (an acronym in French – Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale – meaning Links between actions for the development of the rural economy)
MC	Mercy Corps
MEPA	Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
Phase I	Refers to the programming from 2015 to 2017 when the three LAGs were established
RDFG	Rural Development for Future Georgia
SRDM	Strengthening Rural Development Models (the project under evaluation)
PIN	People in Need

## 1. Executive Summary

The final evaluation for the EU Project - '*Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia*' was conducted in September-October 2019, in Georgia. By this time the Project was on the completion stage into its two-year duration: November 1st 2017 - October 31st 2019. Mercy Corps, along with three other LEADER implementing agencies within the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD Phase II) has **contributed to the reduction of poverty through integrated, sustainable and participatory rural development in Georgia.**

The aim of the final evaluation is to assess the Project outcomes in order to better understand Project successes and challenges and provide recommendations for the design of future Project of a similar scale and direction.

The specific objectives of the final evaluation are to assess and evaluate: (i) the Project's achievements according to beneficiary and partner perceptions (effectiveness); (ii) Capture and analyze Project quality and determine relevance and appropriateness of specific interventions in relation to the intervention zone (relevance); (iii) Check appropriateness of financial, time and HR management of the Project (efficiency); (iv) Ascertain extent, depth and longevity of the Project effects (impact and sustainability); (v) Facilitate analysis and reflection on Programming and strategic planning (recommendations, lessons learned).

*Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia* seeks to build on the success found by Mercy Corps, CARE and People in Need in the Phase I as they introduced the LEADER model for rural development to the municipalities of Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Kazbegi. In addition to continuing to implement this community-led local development approach, they were tasked with providing more nation-level support for other Georgian LEADER implementations with the support of ELARD, a Europe-based not for profit organization.

A series of interviews and focus groups held with beneficiaries, implementing agencies and other stakeholders provided a very positive picture of the impact being delivered by the LEADER model in these three municipalities, particularly in terms of increased engagement with local governance, community cohesion and economic participation.

Results further suggested that the growing presence of LEADER in Georgia's rural municipalities (along with the creation of new LAGs in other municipalities of Georgia) was positively moving Georgian rural governance in the direction envisioned by the Georgian Government and the Delegation of the European Union, that is, towards a state of alignment with the European Common Agricultural Policy.

The main difficulty still remains that Georgian Government policy looking forward appears to be wavering with regards to its commitment to the LEADER model, despite the levels of investment provided by the EU.

### Key Findings and Conclusions:

- The Project responds acutely to the current needs of the rural development goals in Georgia and aligns with the Government of Georgia and MEPA strategies of 'Support to Rural Development';
- The Project is in full compliance with the EU Guidelines and MC Regulations;
- Strong logical framework design, well established M&E system synchronized with other Project partners;
- All targets and indicators have been achieved on time and some have been surpassed;
- Exceptional coordination mechanisms have been established which ensure effective communication between MC, partners, government, beneficiaries and donor;
- Thorough and effective selection process of sub-grantors has ensured the involvement of those in strong need of support and has achieved a commitment from the beneficiaries;
- High satisfaction from the beneficiaries of the quality of both assets procured, and trainings

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delivered;

- LAGs well positioned and their reputation increased throughout the three municipalities;
- LEADER principle promoted in target municipalities and beyond;
- Local community members actively involved in decision-making process for the first time in Georgia;
- GALAG in the process of moving to higher responsibility over the LAGs future development and lobbying. Links with similar European Associations established with ELARD support;
- Improved links between LAGs, GALAG and government;
- The Programme managed to change the perception of rural people towards participation in decision-making on the municipality development goals and ownership via demonstrating the possibility of development of successful LDSs in rural areas through LAGs in collaboration with LAs.

Based on the aforementioned the evaluator concludes that the Project is the most efficient and successful example of comprehensive activities oriented on strengthening the LEADER based rural development model that have been implemented in Georgia during recent years.

### **Main Recommendations:**

- LAGs to develop a Sustainability Plan in consultation with GALAG and other LAGs established under other rural development projects being implemented in different regions of Georgia
- GALAG to strengthen the linkages between all existing LAGs in Georgia through active interchange of the gained knowledge and experiences accumulated during the lifespan of the project
- Georgian LAGs keep in touch with the European LAGs visited within the frames of RDP project
- Open GALAG membership as “observer” status to municipal governments with interest in introducing the LEADER model
- LAGs attempt to measure the citizens of neighboring municipalities’ awareness of LEADER initiatives and demands (if any) for replication in their own communities
- GALAG to include Regional Government in target audience
- Target young people in future efforts to improve understanding of the impact of LEADER on push and pull factors of urban migration
- GALAG to develop examples for municipal governments on how they can support LAGs beyond direct financial contributions
- LAGs more focused on active members and open to women and young people willing to join
- Arrange a targeted information campaign to promote the positive results achieved by the project based on LEADER approach through the platform of LAGs and GALAG which can lead to acknowledgement from the Government at a wider scale in alignment with the pre-accession requirements.

If this is found to be correct with regards to municipal governments, then they should be encouraged to interact via the GALAG, learn more, be given a platform to lobby for the expansion of the LEADER programme, and justify why there would be a positive return from LEADER being introduced within their community.

GALAG and the EC can interact with the relevant Ministries and Central Government, and while LAGs have a close relationship with municipal government, there still appears to be a gap when it comes to keeping Governors informed and educated at the Regional Level.

Examples of indicators from established LEADER programmes in EU member states include:

- *Improved social and human capital, expressed in increased levels of trust, the development of new skills and capacities, the establishment of new networks etc., making the community more resilient and adaptive to changes.*
- *Improved local governance through community and stakeholder involvement in decision making, the LAG’s role in multi-level governance and its ability to manage public-private funds*

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- *Enhanced project results due to increased leverage, more sustainable projects, new project promoters and more innovative projects at local level.*

There has been some anecdotal evidence showing the growing capacity and improvement in the submissions to the grant competition from the beginning of Phase 2.

Respondents spoke of the growing engagement and understanding of the LEADER concept as more competitions were held. As projects from early competitions are implemented, they bring attention of what is on offer and how communities can benefit, and people feel more confident in the process and its fairness, and the range of types of projects available to propose.

*'The LAG is more engaged with the community than the government, but maybe it will inspire the government' – said the local beneficiary from Borjomi*

Youth migration to urban areas is an issue common to all of rural Georgia. Further investigation in future evaluations is required to validate promising responses, such as a music teacher in Lagodekhi who believed the projects, and simply the prospect of being engaged in decisions affecting their communities, had reduced the push for young people to move to Tbilisi.

*'It would be desirable to elaborate a multi-year strategy of LEADER development and the international funding sources to reflect the EU expertise and commitments in Georgia' – stated the MC Country Director.*

However, there was a concern voiced among the key stakeholders regarding the sustainability of the results achieved by the project.

*'... the 4-year effort may not be enough not to lose the motivation and inspiration existing now at the community and local government level to be used efficiently in the future projects, we need more EU in Georgia' – said the RDFG Country Director.*

It should be noted that absolutely all unsuccessful applicants of sub-grant projects have anonymous feeling of the PAC and LAG being fair, transparent and open in conducting the selection process and appreciated the help given by LAG members through individual consultations or trainings in support of potential project beneficiaries.

*'Now I know how to write better proposal to be successful and I am thankful for this lesson learned. This failure made me to identify and deeply understand the weaknesses and transform them into strengths to apply for other grant-contests in future' – said the unsuccessful applicant from Borjomi*

## 2. Project Background

### 2.1 Context

The two-year Project ‘Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia’ sits within a wider European Union initiative entitled ‘European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development in Georgia (ENPARD Phase II)’. The six-year ENPARD initiative (2013-2019) is a close collaboration between the European Union, the Georgian Government, civil society and communities, with the overall objective to strengthen the rural development sector in Georgia. ENPARD aims to improve employment and living conditions of rural populations by introducing and implementing the LEADER model in rural municipalities of Georgia, where the poverty levels have been rapidly falling since 2010 while 41% of the population remain in rural areas.

From July 1st 2015 and until October 31st 2017, within the frames of the EU ENPARD Programme Mercy Corps in partnership with Borjomi Municipality and Angus Council (Scotland) and with support of Austrian Federal Institute of High Mountain and Remote Areas (BAMF), implemented a pilot project - New Approach to Rural Development, very similar to LEADER in Borjomi municipality. Same kind of projects were implemented in Lagodekhi municipality by Care International and in Kazbegi municipality by People in Need (PIN). In November 1st 2017 Mercy Corps in partnership and in coordination with European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), Care International and People in Need started implementation of a joint Project Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP), which is actually a follow-up action of the previous projects (phase II), where all the three organizations continue the project implementation in respective municipalities (Mercy Corps – in Borjomi municipality, Care International – in Lagodekhi municipality and People in Need – in Kazbegi municipality) based on the methodology introduced in previous years, with improved coordination and ELARD support.

The Project Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP) represents a follow-up action of the Rural Development Pilot Project (II Phase), which has been implemented by Mercy Corps in Borjomi Municipality since 2015. The Project is funded by the European Union within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD II). The Project is aimed at promoting and developing a progressing, community-led rural development approach in support of socio-economic development in Borjomi Municipality. Duration of the Project is 24 months (November 1st, 2016 – October 31st, 2019), with total project budget of EUR 1,250,000.

The project itself seeks to build on the work accomplished under the ENPARD Phase I “Pilot Rural Development Measures” project implemented independently in the municipalities of Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Kazbegi from 2015 to 2017 by Mercy Corps, CARE Austria and People in Need (PIN). These three organizations subsequently partnered with ELARD, a non-profit association set up to contribute to the LEADER/CLLD implementation in Europe. It seeks to continue to promote a bottom-up, community-led approach to local development and will further extend support to the existing Local Action Groups in these municipalities. The ideas incorporated into the project design are based upon good practices and lessons learned during the implementation of the ENPARD I projects. They focus on the best ways to make the three LAGs more professional and sustainable, building their knowledge and capacity and providing them with the tools to allow them to operate independently after the project’s completion. The project also supported the disbursal of development sub-grants that will further support the realization of the Local Development Strategies (LDS) that have been developed under the project. In this way the action aims to achieve the specific objective of the project by improving the quality of life of the rural populations within the target municipalities.

The project created a network of all LAGs developed under the ENPARD Programme (and other similar initiatives). This network – termed the Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) – is considered to be a conduit for information exchange and learning across the country, and is acting as an advocate for community-led local development with key state and non-state actors. Much of the support to GALAG came from ELARD who are supporting national LEADER networks working in rural development across the EU. Through this broader, macro-level approach the action works towards the fulfilment of the overall project

objective/outcome of promoting an integrated, participatory and sustainable rural development in Georgia that will contribute to poverty reduction.

In all three municipalities LAGs have been established and by the time of the ENPARD II ‘extension’ project start, they have been operational for two years. The size and composition of each LAG varies over the three locations, but essentially each has a general assembly, a decision-making or advisory body and management representatives, who are nominated by the LAG. These LAG members have been drawn from a broad cross-section of the community and have been formed according to the LEADER principle of ensuring that a minimum of 51% of its membership are private sector (including civil society) actors. This principle aims to ensure that the decision making process is not monopolised and dictated by public sector institutions.

The LEADER Model

LEADER is a local development method which has been used for more than 20 years to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas.

It is implemented by around 2 600 Local Action Groups (LAGs), covering over 54% of the rural population in the EU and bringing together public, private and civil-society stakeholders in a particular area.

LEADER sits within a broader approach referred to as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD). Due to its bottom-up, partnership-based character, CLLD is expected to foster socio-economic development in a way that cannot be delivered by top-down policies. Indeed, the process of community outreach, known as “animation”, and involvement of the local population in the development of its area can be as important as the sum of the individual projects funded.

Community animation can help reach target groups that are hard to reach by traditional, top-down funding schemes; its integrated nature can help foster partnerships and joint action between different stakeholder groups, and the fact that decision-making happens at a local level can encourage more flexible and innovative responses to local problems. It can provide targeted support while building the capacity of local actors to develop and implement their own projects, and the special place afforded to networking and cooperation can facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one area to another and increase the impact of individual actions.

*‘...Such projects are bringing Georgia to the European family’ – stated Vincent Rey, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Georgia*

**2.2 Project Overview, Objectives and Expected Results**

Mercy Corps and the implementing partners (CARE, People in Need & the European LEADER Association for Rural Development) have built on the work accomplished under the ENPARD I “Pilot Rural Development Measures” projects implemented in the municipalities of Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Kazbegi. The project duration was for a 24-month period and was facilitated by a project team that brought significant experience of community and rural development implementation in Georgia and across Europe. It continued to promote a bottom-up, community-led approach to local development and further extended support to the existing Local Action Groups in these municipalities. The ideas incorporated into the project design were based upon good practices and lessons learned during the implementation of the ENPARD I projects. They focused on the best ways to make the three LAGs more professional and sustainable, building their knowledge and capacity and providing them with the tools to allow them to operate independently after the project’s completion. The project also supported the disbursal of development sub-grants that can further support the realization of the Local Development Strategies (LDS) that have been developed. In this way the action aimed to achieve the specific objective of the project by improving the quality of life of the rural populations within the target municipalities.

<b>Donor</b>	<b>European Union</b>
Total Budget	EUR 3,333,331.00
Dates	November 1st 2017 to October 31st 2019

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Partners	PIN, Care Austria, ELARD
Location	Three regions of Georgia; 3 municipalities

Region	Municipality
Samtskhe-Javakheti	Borjomi
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Kazbegi
Kakheti	Lagodekhi

Overall objective/impact: *To contribute to the reduction of poverty through integrated, sustainable and participatory rural development in Georgia.*

Specific objective/outcome: *To improve the quality of life of the rural population in Borjomi, Kazbegi and Lagodekhi through the continuation of a community-led local development approach*

Intermediary Outcome 1: Effectiveness and sustainability of LAGs in the three target municipalities is enhanced through capacity development and networking.

Intermediary Outcome 2: Rural development priorities within the Local Development Strategies are further supported through the funding of viable, community-led projects.

Intermediary Outcome 3: Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) is established and operational.

### Expected outputs

- Public awareness is raised on the Community-led Local Development;
- Inclusion of more youth, women, private sector actors, people with disabilities (PWD) and representatives from remote communities is increased in LAGs;
- Multi-media informational platform established and utilized (including LAG website, mobile texting service, promotional and educational videos etc.);
- LAGs professionalism is increased through training and coaching support;
- Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) is established and is equipped with tools and resources to support Georgian LAGs
- GALAG is a key actor in rural development policy dialogue in Georgia

All Project activities were centered around the aforementioned three intermediary outcomes:

Activity 1.1 Continue to raise awareness within the three target municipalities and communities on LEADER and current phase activities of the project.

Activity 1.2 Facilitate greater inclusion and diversification of LAG membership.

Activity 1.3 Further support more professionalization of the LAG through training and capacity building.

Activity 1.4 Promote cross-linkages between all ENPARD-supported LAGs in Georgia.

Activity 2.1 Review, update and extend Local Development Strategies in the target municipalities

Activity 2.2 Hold competitive application process to identify a minimum of 60 sub-projects for support in the target municipalities.

Activity 2.3 Provide co-financing support to the sub-projects in the target municipalities.

Activity 2.4 Monitor ENPARD 1&2 supported sub-project implementation in the target municipalities and evaluate impact from both ENPARD Phase 1 & 2.

Activity 3.1 Identify from ENPARD-supported LAGs and train GALAG members.

After two years of Project implementation it can be said that the Project fully meets with the Georgian Government policy to reach alignment with EU rules and policies, a so-called “pre-accession” state.

The rural development component of the pre-accession pathway is called IPARD - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development.

There are two objectives within IPARD: 1. To provide assistance for the implementation of the acquis concerning the Common Agricultural Policy; and 2. To contribute to the sustainable adaptation of the agricultural sector and rural areas in the candidate country.

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LEADER is one the 'axis' to be met. The EU has been supporting the implementation of LEADER in Georgia since 2015. The present Project is nearly accomplished with significant achievements as detailed below.

*'...For the future we can build on the trust and collaboration, we will continue collaboration through Estonian fire-rescue project' – said Kristiina Tammets, ELARD Vice President*

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Purpose and Objectives of Final Evaluation

The aim of the final evaluation is to assess the project outcomes in order to better understand project successes and challenges and provide recommendations for the design of future projects of a similar scale and direction, considering among others, findings and recommendations of the mid-term evaluation report.

The evaluator is to deliver a comprehensive report based on primary qualitative research and by analyzing collected quantitative data and information to critically evaluate project relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

This is a final evaluation of Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (SRDM). SRDM commenced on 1 November 2017 and is due to finish on 31 October 2019. While specifically required under the terms of the grant agreement, this evaluation is intended to provide guidance to both the implementers of the grant and the European Commission (EC), the donor. It also contains guidance and learnings relevant to all implementers of the LEADER model in Georgia.

#### Scope

The terms of reference of the evaluation requested a focus on the following:

- Awareness raised within the three target municipalities and communities about LEADER.
- Built capacity of three Local Action Groups and newly established Georgian Association of Local Action Groups (GALAG).
- Relevance of the Local Development Strategy to the local context.
- Assessment of the grant application process.
- Assessment of sustainability of the sub-grant projects funded during Phase II.
- Assessment of the efficiency of networking and communication with other rural development implementing agencies and other stakeholders.

Specific requests were also made for the below:

- Compare planned outputs of the project in the first 12 months to the actual outputs and assess the results and determine their contribution to the attainment of the project objectives.
- Analyze the level of the awareness raised on LEADER approach following to the information campaign and the previous sub-projects implemented.
- Evaluate the composition of the LAG, its operation, its members' knowledge of locally-led development and engagement in all aspects of the project delivery.
- Appraise relevance of the updated Local Development Strategy.
- Assess the efficiency of the selection process of the sub-projects for grant support.
- Meet with project beneficiaries supported during Phase I project in order to assess sustainability of the projects funded.
- Meet various project stakeholders in order to assess level of efficiency of networking and communication within main actors and rural development implementing agencies.

### 3.2 Overall Approach

Preparation was done in close coordination with the project senior staff and M&E staff, specifically:

- Clarification of ToR, data collection methods and logistics for field work
- Review of key project documents; proposal, logical framework, budget, baseline surveys, assessment reports, M&E tools, monthly (internal), quarterly and annual reports (donor), Mid-term evaluation report, communication pieces, including ENPARD website.

➤ Development of various structured questionnaires for all different stakeholders (Annex 2). Data collection was held over a 10-day period in the field. The evaluator conducted all interviews related to Tbilisi based stakeholders, then visited 3 target regions for rural based interviews. All interviews were face to face and lasted approximately one hour. The questionnaire format was semi-structured; some questions were open ended to capture all qualitative reflections.

The respondents were explained the purpose of the evaluation and the evaluator clarified it would be anonymous. All references to specific quotes in the 'Findings' section have not been named, rather just attributed to each actor in general. Interviewed stakeholders were the following:

## Interviewee List

Type	Respondent	Comment
Key Informant Interviews	Mercy Corps Country Director	
	Mercy Corps Programme Director	
	Mercy Corps Programme Manager (Borjomi)	
	ELARD Vice President	
	M&E Coordinator	
	PIN Country Director	Implementation Partner: context; donor landscape
	PIN Programme Manager (Kazbegi)	Implementation Partner; interactions with Mercy Corps as lead
	PIN Programme advisor	
	CARE Country Director	Implementation Partner; context; donor landscape
	CARE Programme Manager (Lagodekhi)	Implementation Partner; interactions with Mercy Corps as lead
	RDFG	LEADER implementer
	HeksEper	LEADER implementer
	EU Delegation Programme Manager	Donor
	MEPA	
UNDP		
Focus Group Discussions	MC Borjomi LAG Members	#4
	LA (Mayor)	#1
	Successful Sub-Project Applicants	#3
	Unsuccessful Sub-Project Applicants	#2
	CARE Lagodekhi LAG Members	#4
	LA (Head of Sakrebulo; Head of Policy Department)	#2

	Successful Sub-Project Applicants	#3
	Unsuccessful Sub-Project Applicants	#2
	PIN Kazbegi LAG Members	#3
	LA (Member of Sakrebulo)	#1
	Successful Sub-Project Applicants	#3
	Unsuccessful Sub-Project Applicants	#2
Survey		Total # respondents 44

These tools were developed based on the Logframe and Terms of Reference.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Relevance

The LEADER model as described above remains relevant for implementation in Georgia.

The LEADER model offers a proven process for measured introduction of decentralized decision-making; the flexibility of the model makes it particularly suited to a society still testing the waters of grassroots democracy.

Georgia has a diligent commitment to full alignment with EU norms and practices, with a long aspiration of acceding to the EU. The LEADER model is a central method of rural development within the Common Agricultural Policy, and so ongoing support and expansion of the LEADER approach in Georgia remains relevant from this perspective.

With the support of the European Union via ENPARD, the Georgian Government drafted a Rural Development Strategy for 2017-2020, which states:

...the creation of effective mechanisms that includes the local population and the facilitation of the participation of women and youth. Capacity building of the rural population for the use of these mechanisms is also very important. From this point of view, the pilot project that tests the efficacy of Local Action Groups (LAGs) is significant.

With regards to the sub-project component, the relevance is measured by the ongoing relevance of each LAG's Local Development Strategy (LDS) and its consistent application to the criteria for sub-project selection.

All three LAGs updated their LDS during the implementation of this project, though none of the LAGs indicated wholesale changes were required since the originals were drafted.

According to the LAG members surveyed, only one (1), a representative of the business sector in Lagodekhi, indicated that they did not believe the LDS was heading in the right direction for the municipality.

During FGDs with community groups, there was consistent agreement with the priorities of the relevant LDS, with most discussion being around which priority deserved the most attention.

The interview question on how the project design matches national and local needs of rural development, was positively addressed by all key informant interviewees.

The Project design closely follows the national priorities of rural development set by the Government of Georgia and is relevant to the EU Guidelines. Rural development is in the list of government priorities and supporting the rural development sector has become a strategic direction of the Government of Georgia.

The Project successfully continued to promote a bottom-up, community-led approach to local development and further extended support to the existing LAGs established under the Phase I projects in the three target municipalities via support of the ELARD through introducing and implementing the LEADER approach in rural areas of Georgia based on European expertise in this sector. The ideas incorporated into the project design are based upon good practices and lessons learned during the implementation of the ENPARD I and II projects. They focus on the best ways to make the three LAGs more professional and sustainable, building their knowledge and capacity and providing them with the tools to allow them to operate independently after the project's completion. The project will also support the disbursement of development sub-grants that will further support the realization of the Local Development Strategies (LDS) that have been developed. In this way the action aims to achieve the specific objective of the project by improving the quality of life of the rural populations within the target municipalities in rural areas.

The Project is in compliance with the European Union requirements in the field of rural development as Georgia is in its accession phase, as the country seeking the EU membership. Sharing the experience of European countries in the rural development sector, such as LEADER approach can play a critical role in meeting the country's priorities. This project echoes to the strategic priorities of Georgia in decentralization of the governance through involving the rural population into decision-making process and raising their awareness on best practices of other European countries.

The Project design both at results and activities levels closely follows the main directions and activities for the rural development outlined in the National Strategy for Rural Development in Georgia. The Project is an efficient and successful example of the comprehensive activities oriented on the rural development that have been implemented in Georgia during recent years.

The EU ENPARD Programme, under which the present Project is being implemented has been developed as a result of the high level public consultation process which ensured its contextual compliance with the national priorities and the main focus on the one of the most vulnerable rural development sector of the country. The Project proposal of Mercy Corps and its partners, as well as proposals of other ENPARD implementing agencies have been developed in full compliance with EU Guidelines and within the framework established by ENPARD Programme for its rural development Projects, the objective of which is to contribute to the reduction of poverty through integrated, sustainable and participatory rural development in Georgia through improving the quality of life of the rural population in Borjomi, Kazbegi and Lagodekhi municipalities through the continuation of a community-led local development approach. This ensured the consistency of objectives and expected results of the Projects of different implementing partners of the phase 2 of ENPARD on the one hand, and enabled the use of LEADER tools and mechanisms for achieving set objectives within the unified framework.

The Project design both at results and activities levels are fully tailored to the actual needs of rural communities at local level. The Project design enabled meeting the needs of the local community members covered by the Project. On the other hand, the Project had a strong component of trainings and experience sharing oriented on filling the gaps in knowledge, information and skills of the rural population and Project beneficiaries. The topics covered proposal writing, management, business plan development, finances and fundraising. The training materials were adapted to and the training topics were selected according to the needs of rural communities identified on the basis of the results of preliminary meetings and consultations. Finally, the Project design included the establishment of LAGs for lobbying and advocacy of local community members' initiatives and needs at the local level.

*'I would mention the exclusive openness, availability and supportiveness of the LAG members to the project beneficiaries and their needs during the entire length of the project, which built more trust and resulted in number of successful sub-projects' – stated a female beneficiary from Lagodekhi*

Successful implementation of the Project thriving to achieve its main goal and specific objectives was enabled by positioning of LAGs as advocating body for local community members to the local government. Establishing GALAG – the Association encompassing all existing LAGs in Georgia was a step forward to map the LAGs on a higher level of central government and institutions. The two Georgian platforms already approached by GALAG were MEPA and ARDA, where the future prospects were discussed under the new IPARD framework, as shared by MEPA Deputy Minister and the Rural Development Interagency Committee was formed. As stated by the RDFG Country Director, the relevant draft document on institutionalization is being developed by RDFG to map the LEADER approach at higher level institutions to avoid the possible risk for the LAGs to become an ordinary NGO with limited or no access to funds for national and/or transnational projects.

*'The most significant and positive outcome of the project based on LEADER/CLLD approach is that the people now can participate in decision-making through LAGs' – said the MC Country Director*

The Project design created an effective mechanism for identification of potential beneficiaries which enabled channeling financial resources to the most promising community members within the limited time period and thereby demonstrating the advantages of LEADER approach.

## **4.2 Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the project at an outcome level, at this final stage of project implementation, is evidently reflecting the achievements made during the lifetime of the project. This is quite apparently shown through the Logframe indicators given below. The achievements therefore could be evaluated as effective given the short timeline of the project (24 months).

### Public Awareness

Public meetings, facilitated by the project implementers supporting the LAGs, proved an effective method of outreach to highly-engaged individuals. Respondents interviewed who went on to apply for sub-grants, successfully and unsuccessfully, all attended these meetings and/or the “open door” sessions where people could turn up at the implementer’s office without an appointment to ask questions. However, it should be considered in the context that only highly-engaged individuals attended these meetings, while interviewed respondents who were interested in the process but not willing to be formally engaged were more likely to use online resources and informal meetings with LAG members to gather information and stay up-to-date. FGDs held with community members, and FGDs held with LAG members, both demonstrated that LAG members, especially those on committees within the LAG, held many outreach sessions of their own in their villages.

*“This Project helped me to return to my home-village and set my own business – dentist’s office and I think this is the most significant and valuable impact of the project as it has built trust in young people and encouraged them to come back from big cities and live and work here.” – said one of the successful sub-grantees from Kazbegi municipality.*

While assessing both the quantitative data of achievements towards the indicators of the logical framework, and also the qualitative opinions on how effective the coordination and implementation has been from different viewpoints: beneficiaries, staff, partners, other LEADER implementing agencies and government stakeholders. Quality assurance has also been captured in order to fully assess the effectiveness.

Achievements of Indicators

	Result Chain	Indicators	Targets	Performance	Comment
<b>Overall objective: Impact</b>	<i>The broader, long-term change which will stem from the project and a number of interventions by other partners.</i>				Economic and political situation in Georgia could be counted more or less stable despite the fluctuation/inflation taking place progressively during the project life-time.
	To contribute to the reduction of poverty through integrated, sustainable and participatory rural development in Georgia.	Local/regional/sectoral policies and regulations take into account needs and interests of rural communities as advocated by the LAGs.	At least 5 policy documents reflect contributions from the project, LAGs and GALAG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Borjomi LDS</li> <li>2. Lagodekhi LDS</li> <li>3. Kazbegi LDS</li> <li>4. Gender Policy Paper in Lagodekhi</li> <li>5. Youth Policy Strategy in Lagodekhi</li> <li>6. Concept document of Lagodekhi City Park Development</li> </ol>	
<b>Specific objective:</b>	<i>The direct <b>effects</b> of the project which will be obtained at medium term and which tend to focus on the changes in behaviour resulting from project Outcome = Oc (possibly) intermediary Outcome = iOc</i>				<i>Factors outside project management's control that may impact on the outcome-impact linkage.</i>
	Oc. To improve the quality of life of the rural population in Borjomi, Kazbegi and Lagodekhi through the continuation of a community-led local development approach	Percentage of respondents of the three municipalities reporting perceived improvements within their municipality as a result of the project.	30%	43% of the population of three municipalities agree that their municipalities are developing in a right way (Q35)	<i>Factors outside project management's control that may impact on the outcome-impact linkage.</i>  Private and Public sectors as well as donors are interested and involved

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			<p>Every fifth respondent take part in public debates and the majority state that these debates have a positive change</p>	<p>in community-driven, participatory rural development processes in the target municipalities</p> <p>Target three municipalities LAGs members are actively involved and committed to the voluntary work as community group members to promote rural development</p> <p>ENPARD II implementing NGOs are collaborative and GALAG members are committed to the work to promote rural development networking</p>
<p>iOc 1. Effectiveness and sustainability of LAGs in the three target municipalities is enhanced through capacity development and networking (advisory)</p>	<p>Operational and financial management procedures and fund raising plan in place and utilized by all the LAGs</p>	<p>100%</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LAG fundraising strategy</li> <li>2. LAG procurement manual</li> <li>3. Financial management manual</li> <li>4. HR guidelines</li> </ol>	
<p>iOc 2. Rural Development priorities within the Local Development Strategies are further supported through the funding of viable, community-led projects</p>	<p>a) Percentage of commercial sub-projects creating new jobs and self-employment opportunities</p> <p>b) Percentage of sub-projects establishing and extending services / resources in target communities</p> <p>c) Percentage of sub-projects that support diversified income sources within target communities</p>	<p>80%</p> <p>40%</p> <p>20%</p>	<p>82% of the commercial sub-projects created new jobs</p> <p>51% sub projects which establish and extent services</p> <p>23% sub projects which support diversification of income</p>	

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	<p>iOc 3. Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) is established and operational</p>	<p>Number and type of platforms at national level in which the GALAG is active and influences RD policy</p>	<p>3 platforms (minimum)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Georgian Alliance for Agriculture and Rural Development (GAARD)</li> <li>2. Georgian Rural Development Network (GRDN)</li> <li>3. ENPARD Stakeholders meeting</li> <li>4. European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Outputs</b></p>	<p><i>The direct/tangible <b>outputs</b> (infrastructure, goods and services) delivered by the project.</i>  <i>Output = Op</i>  <i>Op 1.1. (related to Oc 1)</i>  <i>Op 1.2. (related to Oc 1)</i></p>				<p><i>Factors outside project management's control that may impact on the output-outcome linkage.</i></p> <p>The stakeholders continue close cooperation and coordination with the project implementing NGOs and committed to continue work and find effective ways to address local problems through the contemporary rural development approaches</p> <p><u>Risks</u>          Limited interest from municipal, regional and national level actors to adopt community led development approaches and promote replication</p> <p>Government officials change in the target municipalities</p> <p>Lack of objectivity and transparency within LAGs decision-making process in the target municipalities</p> <p>Arguments and disagreement between LAG members regarding acceptance or rejection of sub-project</p>

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					<p>Limited engagement of other LAGs with GALAG</p> <p>Limited co-financing opportunities for sub-projects from the applicants</p> <p>Natural disasters, including landslides, flood and fire disrupting the project implementation</p>
	Op 1.1 Public awareness is raised on Community-led Local Development	Number of inhabitants of each municipality participating in the public consultation and information meetings organized by LAG under ENPARD phase II	2500	2661 inhabitants participated in consultations or meetings in three target municipalities	
	Op 1.2 Inclusion of more youth, women, private sector actors, people with disabilities (PWD) and representatives from remote communities is increased in LAGs;	Increased participation of youth, women, private sector actors (PS), PWD and representatives from remote communities (RC) as LAG members	<p>Borjomi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- youth 20%</li> <li>- women 50%</li> <li>- PS 65%</li> <li>- PWD 3%</li> <li>- RC 6%</li> </ul> <p>Kazbegi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- youth 25%</li> <li>- women 50%</li> <li>- PS 80%</li> <li>- PWD 1%</li> <li>- RC 35%</li> </ul> <p>Lagodekhi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- youth 20%</li> <li>- women 50%</li> <li>- PS 65%</li> <li>- PWD 2%</li> <li>- RC 0%</li> </ul>	<p>24%</p> <p>57%</p> <p>65%</p> <p>3%</p> <p>6%</p> <p>49%</p> <p>62%</p> <p>91%</p> <p>1%</p> <p>46%</p> <p>20%</p> <p>52%</p> <p>65%</p> <p>2%</p>	The figures are based on quarterly monitoring reports

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	Op 1.3 Multi-media informational platform established and utilized	<p>a) Number of media sources established</p> <p>b) Visitors/users of the multimedia</p>	<p>Website 4</p> <p>Facebook 3</p> <p>YouTube 1 Videos 4</p> <p>20,000 visits</p>	<p><a href="https://borjomilag.ge/">https://borjomilag.ge/</a>,  <a href="https://lagodekhilag.ge/">https://lagodekhilag.ge/</a>,  <a href="http://www.kazbegilag.ge/en">http://www.kazbegilag.ge/en</a>, <a href="http://galag.ge/">http://galag.ge/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/LAGBorjomi/">https://www.facebook.com/LAGBorjomi/</a>.  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/lagodekhi.LAG/">https://www.facebook.com/lagodekhi.LAG/</a>,  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/LAGKazbegi/">https://www.facebook.com/LAGKazbegi/</a></p> <p>Kazbegi LAG Youtube channel  Available at ECU</p> <p>More than 25,000 unique visitors</p>	
	Op 1.4 LAGs professionalism is increased	a) Percentage of key LAG members with increased knowledge after training & coaching	90%	90%	Advisory service data
	Op 2.1 Three LDS are revised and updated (M&E component)	All three municipalities have updated Local Development Strategies and have developed mechanisms for further regular updates.	3 LDS	3 LDS updated for the years of 2019-2024	
	Op 2.2 60 sub-projects are financed	<p>a) Number of sub-projects funded</p> <p>b) Percentage of projects implemented showing sustainability by end of project</p>	<p>60</p> <p>90%</p>	<p>105 sub projects</p> <p>100%</p>	Beneficiary report
	Op 2.3 Monitoring reports produced by LAG on all implemented sub-projects	a) Number of monitoring reports produced	<p>120</p> <p>9</p>	224 monitoring reports	

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		b) Number of LAG members capable to perform M&E responsibilities		20 LAG members in all three municipalities	
Op 3.1 Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) is established and is equipped with tools and resources to support Georgian LAGs	a) GALAG is established	1	Registered on 1 August 2018	-	
	b) Number of materials produced or adapted by the GALAG to develop capacity of existing and new LAGs.	5	8 in total	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suggestions for GALAG members' selection</li> <li>- Results of the reviews of the local development strategies in Borjomi, Kazbegi and Lagodekhi area</li> <li>- LEADER in practice across Europe. Time (tentative) – late May 2018</li> <li>- GALAG co-operation and communication</li> <li>- GALAG as a national LAGs Network – its role and responsibility</li> <li>- GALAG capacity building needs and financial capability</li> <li>- Impact planning and assessment of GALAG activities</li> <li>- Advocacy and lobbying</li> </ul>
Op 3.2 GALAG is a key actor in rural development policy dialogue in Georgia	c) Number of consultations by GALAG to LAGs and other RD actors	15	18		<p>GALAG meetings with member LAG, Meeting with FAO; UNDP; MEPA Participation in various conferences and seminars (LINC; LEADER conferences)</p>

Effectiveness of Coordination

Coordination between all staff, partners, beneficiaries, government stakeholders and the donor is seen as an extremely strong area of ENPARD II RDP Project, indeed almost all interviewees commented that they have never worked on a Project that had so much coordination at all levels. The project has established a high standard of cooperation and coordination between various organizations. The LAGs established under the project are registered in the Public Registry and as independent organizations will continue their functioning in respective municipalities after the project completion.

*'Coordination of the agencies and key stakeholders involved in the project was enabled through provided Stakeholders Meetings at the MEPA at least two times per year including interim ad-hoc meetings and Stakeholder Committee meetings, where the strategic goals were discussed among other issues' – stated the MEPA Deputy Minister*

MEPA underlined the importance of interagency coordination to share the information, check relevance of the actions with the National Rural Development strategy goals and government plans in the field of rural development.

The successful interagency coordination led to build the common understanding of LEADER approach and its promotion country-wide.

Effectiveness of methodology

Successful sub-grantees and not awarded applicants in three municipalities were asked to assess the process of applications and selection of sub-grant beneficiaries:

Activity	Comments
Access to information on the grant application process	Information on the project and the grant application process was disseminated at the community meetings organized by the LAGs and via internet.  Grant contests led by LAGs are notable for simple, clear and easily understandable procedures. Project has developed simple (as compared to other organizations) application forms in Georgian that considerably facilitated farmers' participation.  Communication with the respective LAGs was easy since the respective community members were actively involved in information sharing among their communities and they were giving detailed answers and explanations on how to participate in the project.
Timing of deadline to apply and subsequent notice of pre-selection	Time frame was absolutely ample since LAGs ensured provision of detailed information. The trainings organized by the project were highly effective to help local community members learn application principles, develop business ideas and formulate a business plan.
Visit by the LAG members to verify the application and pre-selection	Visits for the purpose of identification of active applicants involving comprehensive evaluation and/or verification were organized.
Support with developing the full business plan	The project supported stakeholders in the development of business plans via trainings followed by individual consultations. All respondents state that they have received effective and efficient support from the LAG members.

Based on the results of interviews along with quarterly and annual reports submitted to the donor, the evaluator concludes that the project has implemented an extensive information campaign throughout the project coverage area which was facilitated by the presence of LAGs in the regional offices of Mercy Corps, PIN and CARE. Project used a wide range of tools for informing stakeholders: meetings at municipal and community levels, internet, information brochures developed in Georgian, social media, Facebook page, websites and mobile application.

Grant contests organized by the project consisted of several stages. Such approach helped to cover a wide range of interested community members on the one hand, and made the process of screening, filtering and selection of final beneficiaries (total # of beneficiaries, indirect/ disaggregated) highly effective on another. As a result of well-designed evaluation procedures, LAGs managed to identify active applicants with feasible business plans for further support within the project scope.

The evaluation included interviewing sub-grantees from three target regions that were not selected, and all of them rated the methodology for selection as fair and transparent. They were appreciative of the opportunity to apply for the project grant, and would not be deterred from continuing to seek support through other means. Explanations provided by the LAGs of the reasons for not selecting specific project proposals for funding were understandable and acceptable for all of them except one individual (which still insisted his plan was good, despite not scoring high enough to be selected).

Beneficiaries highly appreciate recommendations and advice provided by the project and invited experts during selection of assets. This is especially relevant for relatively new technologies, such as environment protection - waste management, eco-greenhouses, new agri-crops production, etc.

Trainings were without exception greatly received. Many commented they were learning business skills for the first time, and indeed requested more trainings on financial aspects of managing a business.

### 4.3 Efficiency

The principal question here is the efficiency of the LEADER implementation. In particular, the interview question on how much added value it has offered as a Community-Led Local Development approach was answered by the PMs and Country Directors of the LEADER implementing organizations as follows:

*'.. the model proposed by the EU for ENPARD Phase 2, with Mercy Corps, PIN and CARE forming a coalition led by Mercy Corps, offered better value for money than the model of ENPARD 1, where each of the NGOs were independently funded by the EC' – stated the RDP Project Director*

Regarding the latter, the well-formed communication channels between the three implementers, the common understanding of their goals and approaches, and an overall environment of collegiality, suggest that any efficiency savings by having one organization responsible for reporting and donor relations were not offset by difficulties in coordination. This reflects the close coordination seen across all LEADER implementers interviewed in Georgia.

All three LAGs took different approaches to their implementation of the sub-grant process, including the number of competitions run. Efficiency is improving naturally with time and with the local development strategies being refined.

*'This is the first time Borjomi citizens have felt so engaged. There was a significant improvement in the community outreach and the selection process in the 2nd round of grant funding' –stated Borjomi LAG member*

The efficiency of the project in this context is just looking at how economically resources are converted to tangible results. As described above, much of the value of the LEADER approach is in how those results were

achieved, and the support given to people and place, not just the final sub-grant projects. The less tangible outcomes are explored in the “impact” section below.

### Implementation methodology

The act of developing criteria for and promoting the sub-grant competition, then working through the evaluation process, making necessary procurements and awarding the funds, appears to have been done effectively, fairly, and with a high focus on transparency. All three LAGs used different methods throughout with the exception of the procurement process, which was governed by a single set of minimum standards.

According to the Mercy Corps Project Manager, the Borjomi LAG was able to disburse all its funding in only two competitions, as Borjomi’s long history as a tourist hub meant there was great levels of business knowledge in the community, and so they were able to confidently award funding to larger proposals.

For Lagodekhi, the Project Manager noted that since their original proposal in Phase I it had been their intent to give away more, smaller grants. The theory behind this is that it is more inclusive, as smaller grants require less experience in writing proposals. Running multiple competitions gave rejected applicants the chance to learn from the (comprehensive) feedback provided by CARE and the LAG, and re-submit an improved proposal. Interviews with successful applicants confirmed the merit of this approach. It is unclear, however, how much more of an administrative/cost burden this model presents.

While the transparency of the process was never questioned, there were a few mentions in different community FGDs that the opportunities for big business to enter the competitions should be limited. Lagodekhi LAG advised that they had rejected some big businesses once they applied, but this should be advertised at the outset to increase confidence in the process, and avoid discouraging applicants.

This was accounted for by LAGs after initial rounds of funding by adjusting some criteria (not always officially), but this learning should be compiled and shared with all LAGs in Georgia to save them having to rediscover similar learnings.

Kazbegi LAG had to work toward the large number of applicants with project ideas though according to calls quite a big number of projects were funded. There were different sizes of grants requested. Most of them really carried a big value to the municipality development addressing the acute needs of the local communities.

Evaluator believes, that time spent by the coalition for thoroughly going through selection of beneficiaries and their further trainings is fully justified as the potential beneficiaries’ knowledge in business development was extremely low. During the selection process, project through LAGs managed to step-by-step overcome distrust of community members towards the donor-funded project and facilitate transformation of their project ideas into true business initiatives.

## **4.4 Impact**

Based on comments of stakeholders and assessments developed within the framework of the Project, the evaluator believes that the following impacts of the Project are already evident.

*“The Project managed to change the perception and skeptical attitude of rural people towards their important involvement in decision-making process on the challenges identified related to the municipality development enabled through LAG membership” – LAG member in Borjomi.*

While measuring the broader impact of a project and however to do justice to the work being undertaken by all three NGOs in the target municipalities, the impact of the project is framed within three of the new indicators being proposed, being broadly: (i) Local rural economic improvements; (ii) Integration with municipal government; (iii) Integration with national policy; and (iv) The social return and community cohesion. Due to its long-term purpose, poverty reduction is not included as there is no evidence to examine yet, and little likelihood it has occurred at any measurable scale even if the baseline was taken at the beginning of Phase I, as the two, or even four-year period is too small for such assumptions.

Economic improvement

The project attempted to cover the communities through LEADER programme and let them benefit from the sub-projects. The project managed to achieve a quite impressive number of beneficiaries within a two-year period. The figures are shown in the table below.

**Project Beneficiaries = 195,801 (Total)**

Implementer	Direct	Male	Female	Indirect	Sub-Total
Mercy Corps in Borjomi	30,193	19,168	11,025	83,846	83,846
CARE Austria in Lagodekhi	20,638	12,038	8,600	75,000	95,638
PIN in Kazbegi	5,912	3,182	2,730	15,788	16,317
Total					195,801

In line with best practice, the number of households benefiting have also been calculated to more fully understand the wider economic impact of the investments (see indirect beneficiary data in the table above).

Municipality	No of Projects	
	ENPARD RDP Phase I	ENPARD RDP Phase II
Borjomi	28	22
Lagodekhi	31	33
Kazbegi	62	50
Total		105

Responses from community focus groups noted that in addition to generic job creation, it is of note that jobs were being created in unexpected areas, for example in small villages away from the municipal center, where such jobs were not previously expected to exist: A 24-year-old woman living in Timotesubani, a village of Borjomi, married with a young child, successfully applied for a small grant of 5,700 GEL to start a small business making enamel jewelry. The success of the business has enabled her to employ two similarly aged women from the small village, also with children.

**Jobs created, directly and indirectly as calculated at the final evaluation stage of the project is as follows:**

Number of people employed by the projects supported by LAGs in Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Kazbegi Municipalities

Total number of employees	Share of Self Employed	Share of Seasonal	Share of Female	Share of Youth
673	19%	51%	31%	39%

The sub-grant projects were funded both in commercial and non-commercial sectors, like social projects where there was an opportunity to benefit more people in the municipality including children and youth. Below are shown shares of each sector in percentage.

*Sub-grant Projects Total Funding*

Projects	Amount GEL	%
Commercial	8,356,021	74%
Non commercial	2,882,122	26%
Total	11,238.143	

Total Project budget of GEL 11,238,143 was spent sufficiently and effectively. All co-fis were ensured by the beneficiary sub-grantees and/or the third party to achieve the best project results.

Budget (GEL)				
	ENPARD	Co-fi	Total	Co-fi % (Average)
Borjomi	1,983,168	1,434,658	3,417,826	40%
Lagodekhi	2,467,893	1,655,235	4,123,128	
Kazbegi	2,309,137	1,388,052	3,697,192	
Total	6,760,198	4,477,945	11,238,143	

The project budget was complemented in some sub-projects by attracting external funding as detailed below.

### External Funding as a multiplier of the EC investment

Part of the impact of the project is captured by the growing capacity of the LAGs, leading them to be in a position to proactively seek funding from third parties to support priorities identified with their LDS. The ability to do this relied on the LAGs securing registration as stand-alone entities, which all achieved.

Project	Donor	Description	Budget
Identification of women's problems in rural areas and integration of ethnic minorities for developing the correct gender policy	Women's Fund in Georgia	Partner of the LAG: is Gender Equality council of Lagodekhi Municipality. Under the project LAG has conducted meetings in all fifteen communities of Lagodekhi, including the one settled by ethnic minorities, to collect the information regarding the problems and needs women are facing in rural areas. In total 414 people have participated in the meetings, among them 353 women. Based on the Women's Needs Assessment Document that will be finalized in September, LAG in cooperation with the Gender Council of Lagodekhi municipality will elaborate improved gender policy for the municipality	EUR 2661
"HORSE INDUSTRY POSSIBILITIES TODAY AND IN FUTURE" (Borjomi)	EQUUS	Partners: Latvian, Finnish and Georgian LAGs (Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Tetrtskaro) The aim of the project is to promote the competitiveness of equine industry: stables, horse breeders, horse farms, tourism farms and their services by developing a cooperation network of local and foreign horse breeders, promoting exchange of good practice, experience and adapting them in local area	EUR 95 000
Enhancing the co-operation between civil society and governmental institution in Georgian rural areas: creation of voluntary rescue capabilities in Borjomi region (Borjomi)	Estonian Project	The main objective of the project is to reduce and mitigate risks of wildfires in Borjomi Municipality through the early detection and prevention of wildland and forest fires. Project partners: Estonian Volunteer Rescue Association and Borjomi Local Action Group (LAG)	EUR 220 000
Young Walkers Kazbegi	Orbeliani Foundation	Launching of young hikers' club in Kazbegi to facilitate integration of children from	GEL 3100

		different villages of Kazbegi and promote environmentally friendly hiking practice in Kazbegi	
Kazbegi Farmers Market	Austrian Development Agency	Promote local produce and connect producers with tourism market	EUR 9000
Youth Training for Employment	Georgian Ministry of Sports + Youth Affairs	Develop and deliver short courses on accountancy, entrepreneurship, tourism management and agro business	GEL 19,228
Exploring Historical Villages in Kazbegi	Solidarity Fund Polish Aid	Recording of 4x audio guides for tourists	GEL 25,720
From ancient skills to nowadays rural tourism products	LAG own funding	In cooperation with Georgia, Moldova, Italy, Slovenia, Lithuania.  Strengthen international partnerships with LEADER groups (e.g. by planning joint activities and programs);  To encourage the creation of new crafts, homemade products and rural tourism enterprises.  In cooperation with Georgia, Moldova, Italy, Slovenia, Lithuania	--
Tourism development: From Traditions to Modern Business	LAG own funding	Strengthen international partnerships with LEADER groups (e.g. by planning joint activities and programs);  Ensure financial independence of Kazbegi LAG. To promote tourism business development in the partnership territories and to create new, innovative tourism products and services.	--
Supporting Civic Society Organizations and Business Support Organizations in DCFTA and SME policy implementation	PIN Georgia and the EU Commission	Increase the productivity and effectiveness of the agriculture sector by strengthening cooperation and the value chain. Establishing a consultation desk in Kazbegi to implement the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement	--
Towards a better understanding and use of local assets in territories with geographic specificities (aka REVIVAL)	Swedish Institute	Strengthen international partnerships with LEADER groups (e.g. by planning joint activities and programs). Research project aimed at discussing how Transitional Labour Markets (TLM) and Residential Economy (RE) approaches can help increasing the attractiveness of Territories with Geographical Specificities (TGS)  In cooperation with Nordregio (lead partner from Sweden) and the Leontief Centre (Russia)	--
<b>Total</b>			<b>EUR 342,677 (approx)</b>

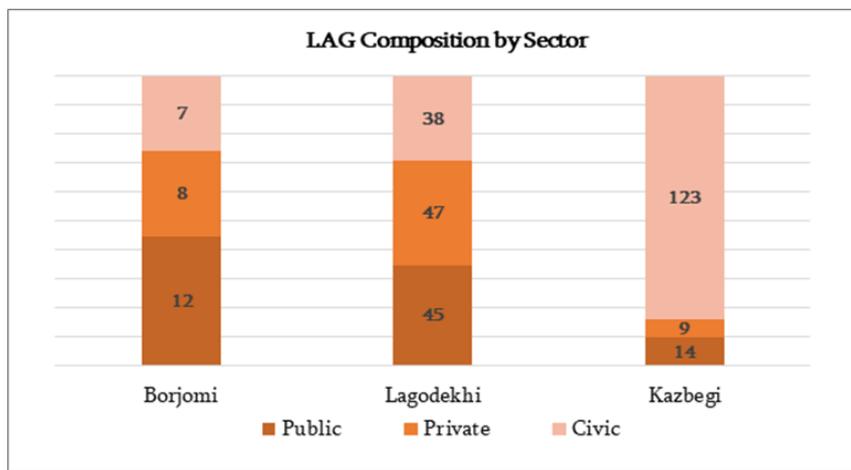
Local Government

*‘This project represents the biggest opportunity for cooperation between the local government and the community and we are ready to provide any possible support to the LAGs in future’ - stated the Mayor of Borjomi.*

Responses during data collection suggest strongly that some of the biggest impact has occurred at the level of the municipal government (known in Georgia as Local Self-Government); in terms of how those within municipal government view community engagement, the increased value they place on it, and their increased awareness of the tools and approaches available to them.

The LEADER model dictates that government officials must comprise less than 50% of the membership of a LAG, however they are under no obligation to field any representation.

With the project having run since 2015, it would be reasonable to expect a degree of fatigue if the project was not demonstrating value. The situation is that on all three LAGs, the respective Deputy Mayor is present and taking an active role. Other members are drawn from the Mayor’s Office, i.e. bureaucrats, or from elected representatives (the Sakrebulo).



Government representatives have carefully noted the positive reception of the approach and the eventual projects through the LEADER approach, and appear enthusiastic to work through the LAG platform where possible.

*‘This is the best platform to discuss the municipality’s future prospects. The Government is looking for additional opportunities to support’ – stated LA representative in Lagodekhi*

Based on the updated needs assessment performed by Lagodekhi LAG for the local development strategy, Lagodekhi LAG advocated on the rehabilitation of local infrastructure to the Mayor’s Office. This activity resulted in an MOU between CARE and Lagodekhi Municipality Mayor’s Office being agreed, based on which the municipal government allocated 254,000 GEL in the local budget for 2019 as co-funding for implementing three infrastructure projects: rehabilitation of Social House for elderly people, rehabilitation of a kindergarten in the village of Leliani, and purchasing classical music instruments for music schools in the Lagodekhi municipality.

Policy

There has not been significant impact yet at a national policy level though the LEADER model was referenced in the Georgian Rural Development Strategy 2017-2020.

*'The most significant impact of the project is that it was for the first time in Georgia, that LEADER principles were introduced and implemented. This was enabled through a new policy and National Strategy priorities in compliance with the Association Agreement set with the EU'- said the UNDP Programme Manager.*

The GALAG was established in August 2018, but is yet to reach its full capacity with regards to its advocacy role. Now that the number of LAGs has increased to eight, and soon to progress to twelve, this should begin to add weight to their advocacy. There start to emerge bodies with more or less similar functions as LAGs like Rural Councils, as well as AMAGI (in Ajara). Rural Councils are acknowledged by the government having awarded a status at the legislative level.

*'The LAGs seeking the recognition form the government have partially achieved it as they are registered as legal entities which means they are already acknowledged officially. The process seems a bit slow regarding the further steps to feeling full support including policy and financial mechanisms from the country's government and donor community though this is normal for the given small timeframe as even European experience shows that time is needed to cope with the innovative approaches to be fully grounded and spread throughout all the municipalities in Georgia, as at the time being only 8 municipalities have the LAGs operational plus 4 in near future which is not sufficient for entire Georgia' - said the Deputy Minister of MEPA.*

In various fora it was mentioned that there was interest and demand from municipalities neighboring the target areas, from both civil society organizations and within municipal governments.

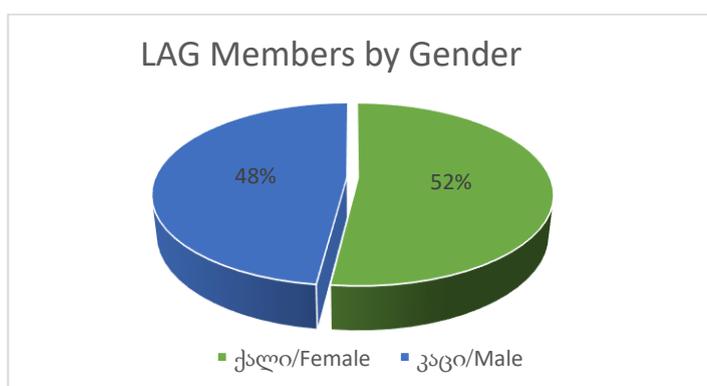
**Gender Analysis:**

During the Project implementation an excessive attention was paid to gender issues. Rural population of Georgia still has some limitations towards the women's role in the society. This project encouraged women to participate in the project at all levels: LAG membership, sub-grant application, etc. The result was quite positive.

**Project beneficiaries in a gender lens:**

Municipality	Direct Beneficiaries	Male	Female
Borjomi	30,193	19,168	11,025
Lagodekhi	20,638	12,038	8,600
Kazbegi	5,912	3,182	2,730

**LAGs' composition in a gender lens:**



Through the work of the LAG gender thematic group, a gender council was established in the Lagodekhi municipal government in 2018, and the council developed a gender policy paper and action plan.

*‘Our mission is not to leave the LAG in a box’ – stated Lagodekhi municipal government representative*

The interview question: How do you assess the inclusion of local women and youth in the Project was answered quite positively in all three municipalities. Women proved to be very active in Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Kazbegi. Their involvement in the project has been continuously encouraged by LAGs.

*‘The project played a significant role in the municipality by bringing behavioral changes of the local people which is becoming evident nowadays’ – said a young male beneficiary in Kazbegi municipality regarding the local women and young girls.*

Respondents commented that women engagement has increased as a result of their participation in trainings. However, it indicates that the project has promoted women employment in rural areas.

#### **4.5 Sustainability**

During the evaluation process a number of arguments for the possibility of the project feasibility and sustainability of its results have been brought forward. However, there have been also concerns about premature termination of support provided to the rural development that could make the sustainability of the achieved more time-sensitive.

Sustainability of project results at the national level is ensured by the institutionalized character of the support being provided to rural communities that has been facilitated by the RDP, GALAG has been established.

However, the Ministry of Agriculture commented that the project duration was not sufficient to ensure full sustainability of its results. The European LAGs under LEADER programme have been developing for more than 20 years. More efforts shall be focused on the rural development throughout the country.

In consideration of all the aforementioned and based on the current status of the LAGs/GALAG and interview results, still it can be said that majority of the sub-grant projects are meant to develop further in their post-project life which will further help to secure their sustainability.

The sustainability of an independent LAG is not necessarily relevant in the context of the LEADER model. It is common across the EU countries where LEADER has been implemented for many decades for LAGs to appear, disappear, merge and alter between each new phase of funding.

*‘We should think how to make the LAGs less vulnerable than they could be taking into account that a 20-year-long European LEADER experience could not be fit into a 4-year project’- said the Advisor to Kazbegi project implemented by PIN (former PM Kazbegi)*

The sustainability and impact of this programme have been considered in terms of: (i) Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices with regards to *Working as a community* and *Community Input into decision making (from the perspective of both communities and government)*; (ii) Changes in expectations of government with regards to community engagement; (iii) Demand developed outside target areas for the LEADER model; and (iv) Changes in policy at a Ministry level.

This project (Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia) and its predecessor (A New Approach for Rural Development in Georgia) were mainly pilots being funded by the European Commission. In addition, it is

an opportunity for the Georgian Government to continue to pursue its policy of alignment with European Union policies, specifically in this case the CAP's requirement for implementation of LEADER in member states.

The EU's intentions were clear with regard to rural development. Discussing with UNDP around the role of LEADER was echoed amongst a number of Country Directors and other key stakeholder agencies. As most them state, the EU has a financial mechanism for rural development in place for a long time while Georgia is still in its starting point in terms of LEADER implementation, which should be spread throughout the country from the eight municipalities with already established and registered LAGs. More opportunities for bottom-up initiatives should be created to strengthen the LAGs and promote the LEADER approach at a wider scale.

The LEADER approach is centered around the local partnerships. No matter on whose initiative the creation process of the LAGs begins, the key role in building the real partnership is played by the leaders of the process, and their animators. The experience in the EU suggests that most animators come from civil society. They work effectively on behalf of local communities and demonstrate competences in cooperation with public institutions (mostly local authorities) and are able to encourage local entrepreneurs to join in the partnerships.

#### Instrument for pre-accession assistance for rural development

If Georgia wants to progress along its pre-accession route, the MEPA will need to look to its eventual role as an IPARD Managing Authority, where its role "should focus on tasks that aim to facilitate the work of LAGs at local level, by providing the necessary implementation framework for LAGs and a supervisory system in order to monitor implementation at the local level."

Some stakeholders suggested that centrally-managed regional grants programmes could fill the gap left by allowing the LEADER model to fade. This would be a backward step on the path to accession, and a missed opportunity to use a more effective platform that has already been established at great expense:

*'The LEADER model has worked well in the past in promoting coherence and integration of rural policies. This successful model should be considered more carefully in the future... rather than intervening with the opposite logic of reducing former Leader groups to assist in delivering centrally defined and horizontal policies' - OECD Rural Policy Review 2008*

Currently, municipalities lack dedicated focal points for formal LAG interaction, instead relying on the municipal government representatives on the LAG. However, this does limit the interaction based on personalities, and reduces the development of an institutional relationship, which impacts on the sustainability. Even were there a dedicated focal point, many municipality employees change over at elections, with the changeover not restricted just to elected representatives.

Municipal government officials expressed a desire to be able to support the LAGs, however they do not have extensive discretionary funding. Clear examples should be provided for municipal governments on how they can support the LAGs beyond providing co-financing for projects. This may be in the form of providing meeting spaces, administration support, etc.

This would also bring Georgia closer to alignment with the EU Common Agricultural Policy requirements:

*'...must ensure that the LAGs either select an administrative and financial lead actor able to administer public funds, and ensure the satisfactory operation of the partnership, or come together in a legally constituted common structure, the constitution of which guarantees the satisfactory operation of the partnership and the ability to administer public funds' - EU Legal Framework- LAG administrative capacity under IPARD.*

In the evaluator's opinion all the above mentioned can have a positive impact on the sustainability of the project.

## 5. Conclusions & Lessons Learned

### Conclusions

The evaluator is confident that sufficient data were available, collected and subsequently analyzed in order to respond to the purpose of the final evaluation. Each criterion has been graded on a scale of low, moderate or high, with the following comments:

#### Relevance - HIGH

- Proposal responds acutely to the current needs of the Georgian rural development sector and aligns with the Government of Georgia, MEPA strategies of 'Support to Cooperation Development';
- The project design both at results and activities levels are fully tailored to the actual needs of rural community members at local level;
- Strong logical framework design with achievable indicators, well established M&E system synchronized with RDP other partners;
- Partnership roles are clear and complementary which ensure jointly achieving of objectives.

#### Effectiveness – HIGH

- All targets have been fully achieved on time; All indicators at results level have been achieved and some have been surpassed;
- Exceptional coordination mechanisms have been established which ensure effective communication between MC, partners, ENPARD Consortia, government, beneficiaries and donor;
- Thorough selection process of sub-grant projects has ensured the involvement of those in strong need of support and has achieved a commitment from the beneficiaries;
- High satisfaction from sub-grantees of the quality of both assets procured, and trainings delivered.

#### Efficiency – HIGH

- Much added value offered as a Community-Led Local Development approach;
- Experience, qualification and responsiveness of the staff involved ensured smoothly implementation in accordance with the work-plan.
- The model proposed by the EU for ENPARD Phase 2, with Mercy Corps, PIN and CARE forming a consortium led by Mercy Corps, offered better value for money than the model of ENPARD 1, where each of the NGOs were independently funded by the EC;
- The well-formed communication channels between the three implementers, the common understanding of their goals and approaches across all LEADER implementers interviewed in Georgia led to high efficiency;
- Beneficiaries were able to meet the co-financing commitments without concerns;

#### Impact –HIGH

- The Programme managed to change the perception of rural people towards a participatory decision-making and demonstrating the possibility of development of successful businesses in rural areas through project sub-grant opportunities;
- Several beneficiaries have introduced new practices due to support received;
- Business achievements have notably increased incomes for beneficiary sub-grantees;
- Employment patterns improved and new jobs created;
- The project encouraged local community members to get involved in LDS development and implementation;
- Evident behavioral change in the local community members with regard to how to make their voices heard at the government level;
- Support in strengthening women actors in rural areas;
- Involving more youth in the projects and thus raising interest of young people migrated to big cities to come back and start their own businesses.

### Sustainability – MODERATE TO HIGH

- Though the LAGs are well trained and positioned to use their full potential to continue their mission, they still need support to grow as the independent self-sufficient entities;
- GALAG is gaining more strength and develops an Action Plan to be followed after the project completion;
- Improved links between LAGs both in Georgia and abroad become mutually beneficial through developing think-tanks for joint ideas;
- Premature termination of external support provided to the rural development in Georgia based on LEADER approach could make the sustainability of the achieved questionable.

#### **Lessons Learned:**

The statements given below have been gathered from the interview questions, although it must be noted that most respondents did not offer additional comments whenever asked, saying that they could not think of any, as most of the implementation having run smoothly.

- Knowledge and experience of the LAG members involved in the project from the very beginning could have been used at earlier stage to make a long-term strategic planning to ensure LAGs' sustainability;
- Initiation of similar projects that will be focused on maintaining and improving the project's achievements is necessary;
- Cautiously planned information campaigns needed to prevent expectations rising and misunderstandings regarding long-term external support;
- More focus on youth and women is necessary in order to reduce the migration through the emergence of new jobs in rural areas.

## 6. Recommendations

- LAGs to develop a Sustainability Plan in consultation with GALAG and other LAGs established under other rural development projects being implemented in different regions of Georgia
- GALAG to strengthen the linkages between all existing LAGs in Georgia through active interchange of the gained knowledge and experiences accumulated during the lifespan of the project
- Georgian LAGs keep in touch with the European LAGs visited within the frames of RDP project
- Open GALAG membership as "observer" status to municipal governments with interest in introducing the LEADER model
- LAGs attempt to measure the citizens of neighboring municipalities' awareness of LEADER initiatives and demands (if any) for replication in their own communities
- GALAG to include Regional Government in target audience
- Target young people in future efforts to improve understanding of the impact of LEADER on push and pull factors of urban migration
- GALAG to develop examples for municipal governments on how they can support LAGs beyond direct financial contributions
- LAGs more focused on active members and open to women and young people willing to join
- Arrange a targeted information campaign to promote the positive results achieved by the project based on LEADER approach through the platform of LAGs and GALAG which can lead to acknowledgement from the Government at a wider scale in alignment with the pre-accession requirements.

## Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Final Evaluation of Programme: <i>Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP)</i></b>
<b>Primary Location:</b>	<b>Tbilisi, with travels to Lagodekhi, Kazbegi and Borjomi Municipalities as required</b>
<b>Position:</b>	<b>Evaluator</b>
<b>Proposed Dates of Assignment:</b>	<b>10th September 2019 – 10th October 2019</b>

### PROGRAMME BACKGROUND:

The Project *Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP)* represents a follow-up action of the Rural Development Pilot Project (II Phase), which has been implemented by Mercy Corps in Borjomi Municipality since 2015. The Project is funded by the European Union within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD II). The Project is aimed at promoting and developing a progressing, community-led rural development approach in support of socio-economic development in Borjomi Municipality. Duration of the Project is 24 months (November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 – October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019), with total project budget of EUR 1,250,000.

The European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) has been implemented in Georgia since 2013. The Programme is aimed at revitalization of agriculture and rural development sectors in Georgia through multilateral cooperation of the government, civil society and local farmers. ENPARD budget for Georgia in 2013-2020 period in total counts for EUR 102 million (I phase – EUR 52 million, II phase – EUR 50 million).

The project covers 3 municipalities in three regions of Georgia:

Mtskheta-Mtianeti region: Kazbegi municipality

Kakheti region: Lagodekhi municipality

Samtskhe-Javakheti region: Borjomi municipality

From July 1st 2015 and until October 31st 2017, within the frames of the EU ENPARD Programme Mercy Corps in partnership with Borjomi Municipality and Angus Council (Scotland) and with support of Austrian Federal Institute of High Mountain and Remote Areas (BAMF), implemented a pilot project - New Approach to Rural Development, very similar to LEADER in Borjomi municipality. Same kind of projects were implemented in Lagodekhi municipality by Care International and in Kazbegi municipality by People in Need (PIN). In November 1st 2017 Mercy Corps in partnership and in coordination with European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), Care International and People in Need started implementation of a joint Project *Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP)*, which is actually a follow-up action of the previous projects (phase II), where all the three organizations continue the project implementation in respective municipalities (Mercy Corps – in Borjomi municipality, Care International – in Lagodekhi municipality and People in Need – in Kazbegi municipality) based on the methodology introduced in previous years, with improved coordination and ELARD support.

As the 4-year Project is nearing its end, Mercy Corps has embarked on one of the last important tasks of the Project - its final evaluation.

Mercy Corps is seeking the service of a qualified professional - either national or international - to undertake the final programmatic evaluation of the “*Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia (RDP)*” Project in September-October, 2019.

#### **EVALUATION PURPOSE:**

The aim of the final evaluation is to assess the project outcomes in order to better understand project successes and challenges and provide recommendations for the design of future projects of a similar scale and direction, considering among others, findings and recommendations of the mid-term evaluation report. In order to accomplish this aim, Mercy Corps is searching for a dynamic and competent final evaluation consultant with proven experience in qualitative research methods as well as quantitative analysis and reporting skills. The final evaluation consultant will produce a comprehensive report based on primary qualitative research and by analyzing collected quantitative data and information to critically evaluate project relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

#### **CONSULTANT OBJECTIVES:**

- Evaluate the Programme's achievements according to beneficiary and partner perceptions, reviews of project documents and data, including data from the mid-term evaluation (effectiveness).
- Capture and analyze Programme quality and determine relevance and appropriateness of specific interventions in relation to the intervention zone (relevance).
- Check appropriateness of financial, time and HR management of the Programme (efficiency).
- Ascertain extent, depth and longevity of the Programme effects (impact and sustainability).
- Facilitate analysis and reflection on Programming and strategic planning (recommendations, lessons learnt).

#### **CONSULTANT ACTIVITIES:**

- Review and synthesize Programme documents, including reports, plans, baselines and so on.
- Meet key stakeholders including Donor, MoA, ACDA, ICCs, ENPARD implementing agencies, partners, direct beneficiaries, etc. to assess implementation of the Programme efficiency, impact and sustainability.
- Collect key findings, develop recommendations, compile lessons learnt.
- Produce final evaluation paper in the required format, which will not exceed 30 pages.

#### **CONSULTANT'S DELIVERABLES:**

1. Evaluation plan, including methodology/tools.
2. Preliminary findings presented and discussed with MC and its partners.
3. Final evaluation report incorporating feedback from Mercy Corps.

All the deliverables should be in English. The minimum report content requirement is as follows:

- ✓ Cover page, list of acronyms
- ✓ Table of contents
- ✓ Executive summary
- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Findings
- ✓ Conclusions
- ✓ Recommendations in order of priority
- ✓ Lessons learnt

**TIMEFRAME/SCHEDULE:**

The total number of working days for the evaluation is 39. The work is expected to start on 18th September 2017 and end by no later than 10th November 2017. It would consist of the following stages:

- \*\* Review of documents (3 working days)
- \*\* Development and submission of the evaluation plan (3 working days)
- \*\* Evaluation field work in Tbilisi and 5 regions of Georgia (16 working days)
- \*\* Analysis and presentation of the key findings (4 working days)
- \*\* Development and submission of the evaluation report (8 working days)
- \*\* Finalization of the report based on the feedback provided by Mercy Corps and partners (2 working days)

The Consultant will report to: Programme Manager and Deputy Programme Manager.

The Consultant will work closely with: Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**

- \*\* Technical knowledge of monitoring and evaluation, preferably in agriculture sphere.
- \*\* At least 5 years of previous relevant experience - conducting evaluations, consultancies. etc.
- \*\* Significant experience in using qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluations.
- \*\* Experience of working in international organizations.
- \*\* Experience of working with EU Programmes.
- \*\* Fluency in English.
- \*\* Excellent writing and analytic skills.
- \*\* Cultural sensitivity and facilitation skills.

Applications will take the form of a CV and a maximum 2 page cover letter detailing a brief plan of activities and costs to conduct the evaluation. CV must also include names, positions and contact addresses of at least two persons, whom Mercy Corps can contact for references. This will need to be submitted in English.

Interested applicants should send their CV and cover letter via e-mail to: [hr@mercycorps.ge](mailto:hr@mercycorps.ge) no later than September 1, 2017, indicating Programme Final Evaluation in the Subject line.

Please note that only shortlisted applicants will be contacted for an interview.

## Annex 2. Interview Questionnaires

### 1) Questionnaire for Stakeholders

1. How the Project design matches national and local needs of rural development?
2. How do you evaluate the most important outcome of the Project?
3. Was the LEADER approach promoted in the three target municipalities? Beyond?
4. How was the Capacity of the Local Action Groups (LAGs) and newly established Georgian Association of Local Action Groups (GALAG) built?
5. How do you evaluate the relevance of the Local Development Strategy to the local context?
6. How do you assess the grant application process?
7. How do you assess the inclusion of local government, women and youth in the Project?
8. How the sustainability of the sub-grant projects funded under Phase I and Phase II was built?
9. How much added value it has offered as a Community-Led Local Development approach, i.e. Was the LEADER approach key to solve the major community challenges in the municipality?
10. Did the model proposed by the EU for ENPARD Phase 2, with Mercy Corps, PIN and CARE forming a consortium led by Mercy Corps, offered better value for money than the model of ENPARD 1, where each of the NGOs were independently funded by the EC?
11. How do you assess the efficiency of networking and communication with other rural development agencies and other stakeholders?
12. What were the most significant challenges the Project faced during the implementation? Were they solved?
13. Was the Project budget spent as efficiently as planned?
14. Which lessons are learnt by the end of the Project?
15. What would be your recommendations to be considered in future efforts in the field of rural development based on LEADER approach?

### 2) Questionnaire for Successful Beneficiaries (Sub-grants)

1. How did you learn about the Project?
2. Have you participated earlier in any similar Project/s (experience)
3. How do you participate in the Project?
4. What are the project's strengths and weaknesses?
5. What do you know about the LEADER approach?
6. What do you know about the LAG? GALAG?
7. How did you learn about the grant contest?
8. How do you evaluate the grant application process?
9. Did you get any instructions related to application?
10. How do you evaluate the Grant Contest? Was it fair?
11. Do you know any unsuccessful grant applicant in your community?
12. How do you think why were they rejected?
13. Do you know any other successful beneficiaries' projects within your community?
14. How the project supported you in terms of grant implementation and sustainability?
15. What do you think is the most significant Project impact and how it contributed to municipality's development, i.e. how the Project did change your life/your community's life?
16. Do you know any women, youth or any community members with disability involved in the project? (what about your sub-grant project?)
17. Do you see the LAG's role in the future as the intermediary body allowing your community needs to be heard by the local authorities?
18. Do you know any case where the LAG's interference was successful to convince the local authorities to make necessary steps to meet the community needs?
19. Will you recommend your neighbor or friends to get involved in such projects in future?
20. What would you change in future if capable?

### 3) Questionnaire for Unsuccessful Beneficiaries

1. How did you learn about the Project?
2. Have you participated earlier in any similar Project/s (experience)
3. What do you know about the LEADER approach?
4. What do you know about the LAG? GALAG?
5. How did you learn about the grant contest?
6. How do you evaluate the grant application process?
7. Did you get any instructions related to application?
8. How do you evaluate the Grant Contest? Was it fair?
9. Do you know any successful grant applicant in your community?
10. How do you think why were they successful?
11. Do you know any other unsuccessful beneficiaries within your community?
12. Do you know any women, youth or any community members with disability involved in the project?
13. Are you willing and ready to participate in other projects and grant contests, i.e. are you now well informed on what is necessary to win the grant?
14. Will you recommend your neighbor or friends to get involved in such projects?
15. What would you change in future in LEADER approach in your community if capable?

### 4) Questionnaire for FGDs

1. Please, tell us about yourself, how long do you live in this municipality?
2. How did you learn about the project?
3. Have you heard about LEADER, LAG or GALAG before the project?
4. How would you assess the most positive impact the project had in your community?
5. Who was most significantly affected by project in your opinion: 1) Project staff (LAG)? 2) Project beneficiaries (sub-grantees); or 3) LAs? Other?
6. How would you assess the LDS document elaborated based on a participatory approach?
7. How would you assess, where the strategic priorities met by the project?
8. What was the most significant impact of the project?
9. Have you ever participated in decision-making process?
10. Is there anything that you would improve or change in the LEADER implementation process?
11. What needs to be done to ensure that LAG continues its role of mediator between the community and the government after the project completion to be sustainable?
12. Would you add anything to the said above?

### 5) Questionnaire for Local Authorities

1. How long are you in this position?
2. Which priorities were identified in the LDS developed by LAG?
3. Are these priorities in line with National Strategy documents for rural development?
4. What were the challenges that you see in LEADER implementation in your municipality?
5. What were the ways you suggest to solve those challenges?
6. Do you have information on any successful sub-projects implemented under RDP?
7. Did the project contribute to achievements of the municipal goals?
8. Is the LEADER approach relevant tool to ensure joint participation of the community members through LAG and local self-government in decision-making?
9. Has the project implementation brought any positive changes in the municipality development?
10. Would you add anything to the said above?

### **Annex 3. Documents Consulted**

1. Project Proposal document including Results Framework and Budget
2. The EU Guidelines – General Conditions
3. MC Regulations - Field Procurement Manual
4. Project Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Reports to Donor
5. Baseline Survey
6. Brochures, leaflets, posters
7. Mid-Term Evaluation document
8. Examples of Monthly Monitoring Reports
9. Trainings' material, reports and assessments