

TERMS OF REFERENCE

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF SUAS FAST FORWARD PROJECT

INTRODUCTION:

Suas is currently inviting interested parties to make an offer in relation to the independent evaluation of its Fast Forward Project in Zambia in late 2019 and/or early 2020. This evaluation responds to both a desire to review and learn from the experience of this pilot project and a commitment to Irish Aid to commission an external evaluation of the project that it is funding.

The project is just commencing and, with some available funding, Suas would like to engage its independent evaluator now so that they can support with the development of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and tools for the project, the baseline and endline studies and also supply targeted M&E capacity building workshops over the two years to make for a more useful final evaluation.

This document is intended to support interested parties to make an offer for this work by providing some information on the programme (background, expected results, methods, outputs) as well as our initial thinking on the work. Please submit a written offer by 10/08/2018 to stephenc@suas.ie and joanne@suas.ie.

BACKGROUND:

Suas is a children's literacy charity. We have a simple but powerful belief – literacy changes everything. Founded in Ireland in 2002, we work with disadvantaged children in Ireland, India, Zambia and Kenya.

In Ireland, our trained volunteers provide one-to-one reading and maths support to children in disadvantaged schools. Since 2012, we've helped over 4,300 children from the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland to improve their literacy skills.

Internationally, we've directly supported over 12,000 children in India, Kenya and Zambia since 2003. We've also trained over 1,100 Suas volunteers to work as teaching assistants in some of the world's most marginalised, under-resourced communities.

The Fast Forward Project is a pilot project for Suas, which builds on Suas' and our partners' experience. Irish Aid is providing funding for the project (the total budget for the Irish-Aid funded project is ~€200,000 with Irish Aid contributing €120,000). Suas is also contributing its own resources and raising funding from other philanthropic and corporate sources.

FAST FORWARD PROJECT:

The overall aim of the Fast Forward project is to improve the educational outcomes of girl and boy students in under-resourced community schools in Zambia.

In order to achieve this, this project will support the Zambian NGO Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) to enhance their training programme for community school teachers to include, among other elements, new technologies developed by Zambian education technology company Mwabu. The project will also support ZOCS to develop their results-based management and monitoring and evaluation approaches and to build an evidence base to support their ongoing advocacy work for more supports for community schools, which account for 20% of all enrolments in basic education in Zambia.

This pilot project will be conducted in three districts in Zambia involving 15 community schools, 75 teachers and 2700 children and has two core outcomes:

1. Undertrained community school teachers are empowered to become inspiring and effective educators and give their students a quality education
2. ZOCS have increased capacity to support under-resourced community schools in Zambia

Key activities include: equipment of learning centres, development and delivery of enhanced training and support programme for teachers, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for teachers and children, and expansion planning.

Please see Annex 1 for more detail on project outcomes and activities.

The aim is to develop and test a approach which, if successful, can be scaled to community schools in all districts in Zambia and can transform the educational experiences of disadvantaged children in these community schools.

We are now seeking external support for the evaluation of the project and some associated pieces of work.

1. PROJECT EVALUATION:

Aim:

To conduct an external evaluation of the Fast Forward project for the period 2018-2019

In a way that:

- Satisfies Irish Aid evaluation requirements
- Is informed by a strong understanding of international education and best practice
- Takes a broad view and looks at the wider Project / Organisations / Context
- Raises key questions and is open and collaborative in approach
- Presents a fair, credible and balanced overview and perspective
- Constructively informs the strategic development of the Project

So that:

- Suas has a Project evaluation and can incorporate critique, commendations and lessons learnt into the strategic development and next phase of the Programme

And

- Irish Aid and other donors and organisations have an independent evaluation of the Project for informing strategic funding / policy decisions

Scope:

It is proposed that the Project is evaluated with reference to Suas monitoring and evaluation policy (please see excerpt in Annex 3) as well as against Suas and ZOCS' own goals & objectives for the project. Suas has developed a results framework for the programme. An excerpt of this is included in Annex 2, and a full copy of the framework can be shared upon request.

Methodology and Timeline:

The evaluation would draw on quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods and ideally involve a combination of desk research, surveys, field visits, interviews and/or focus groups.

While the overall timeframe for the evaluation is flexible, the dates available for potential field visits would depend on activity schedules in the various locations in late 2019 and/or early 2020.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF M&E FRAMEWORK & TOOLS:

We would like to engage the evaluator at the outset of the project so that they can work with us to develop the M&E framework for the project and select/adapt the tools for data collection to support ongoing M&E of the project.

Our overall plan is to use a mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach combining surveys of teachers and students with tests based on national assessments, data generated by the tablets being used etc.

3. BASELINE AND ENDLINE STUDIES:

We require a baseline assessment and an endline assessment. The assessments would identify where participating teachers and students are before and after the intervention. We would like to extend the baseline and endline to non-participating students and teachers in other comparable schools to see what the real effect of the programme is.

The project anticipates that teacher baseline surveys (focusing on teacher characteristics, levels of teacher training, resources, assessment of pedagogical approaches etc) will be conducted for all targeted areas before the end of 2018. A sample of students will also undergo testing in areas of relevance to the ABCDE framework.

The evaluator could conduct the baseline and endline studies with support from project staff (see next section).

4. CAPACITY BUILDING OF PROJECT STAFF:

As part of this project, Suas will engage an education specialist and ZOCS will employ a programme officer and contribute towards the salary costs of three district resource centre coordinators. These staff will do ongoing monitoring as part of their roles in the project and are in a strong position to support the final evaluation of the project. They could also potentially support with the completion of baseline and/or endline studies.

We envisage 1-2 workshops with project staff in the early months of the project (September 2018) and during the project (in Spring 2019) to build their capacity to support with the effective M&E of this project.

BUDGET:

We have budgeted for this monitoring and evaluation work at a total cost of ~€8,500 including cost of consultancy days, data collection, field visits and other relevant costs.

COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF CONTRACTOR:

Essential

- Knowledge and understanding of international education and Zambian context
- Experience of evaluating teacher training programmes
- Strong analytical skills and familiarity with managing for results
- Strong written and communication skills
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Strong organisational abilities
- Brings a learning orientation to evaluation
- Research experience and/or qualifications

Preferable

- Experience of evaluating programmes at early stages of development
- Experience of strategy development
- Brings an upfront approach and is unafraid to ask challenging questions.

NOTE IN RELATION TO OFFER:

Suas would be grateful to interested parties if, when making their offers, they could respond under the following headings:

1. **Experience:** please comment on your knowledge, skills and experience relevant to this project
2. **Approach and Methodology (including workplan/schedule):** please outline your proposed approach to the project including a workplan/schedule
3. **Costs:** please provide a breakdown of the costs for this work
4. **Any questions or comments:** please share any question or works in relation to the work outlined or any thoughts on additional work that could be undertaken to increase the usefulness of the evaluation and what this would cost

Please submit all offers to stephenc@suas.ie and joanne@suas.ie by 10/08/2018.

ANNEX 1: FAST FORWARD PROJECT – OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction:

The overall aim of the Fast Forward project is to improve the educational outcomes of girl and boy students in under-resourced community schools in Zambia. To achieve this, this project will support ZOCS to enhance their training programme for community school teachers to include, among other elements, new technologies developed by Zambian education technology company Mwabu.

(Note: The Zambian Ministry of General Education has signed MoUs with both ZOCS and Mwabu, formally approving ZOCS' training programme for community school teachers and Mwabu's technology for use in primary schools. This project fits with these MoUs.)

The project will also support ZOCS to develop their results-based management approaches and monitoring and evaluation approaches, and to build an evidence base to support their ongoing advocacy work at local, regional and national level for more supports for community schools, which account for 20% of all enrolments in basic education in Zambia.

This pilot project will be conducted in three districts in Zambia involving 15 community schools, 75 teachers and 2,700 children and will deliver the following key outcomes (as per results framework):

1. *Undertrained community school teachers are empowered to become inspiring and effective educators and give students a quality education*
 - a. Teachers deliver high-quality lessons and mentoring relevant to curriculum and ABCDE framework (academic, self-belief, critical thinking, digital and technological skills, equality and rights awareness)
 - b. Students (girls and boys) have improved learning outcomes across all aspects of the ABCDE framework
2. *ZOCS have increased capacity to support under-resourced community schools in Zambia*
 - a. ZOCS have increased capacity to deliver teacher training integrating, among other elements, digital technology
 - b. ZOCS have increased capacity in the area of results-based management, and an evidence base to inform their ongoing advocacy work for more supports for community schools in Zambia
 - c. ZOCS have developed plans to replicate this approach to teacher training in a further 50 districts in Zambia where they are currently supporting community schools/training teachers.

Rationale:

Community schools account for 20% of enrolments in basic education in Zambia and serve disadvantaged and marginalised communities, but progress in addressing educational quality issues in community schools has been slow despite support from national education authorities. ZOCS is in a position to scale this project if successful. This project takes a holistic education approach because it is vital that young people become literate and numerate and overcome the 'digital divide', and that they gain skills and competencies needed to succeed in the modern workplace, including those traditionally not obtained in schools in Zambia: critical thinking, digital and technological skills, and rights awareness.

The project also recognises a lack of internal and external accountability for teachers in Zambia hinders their ability to assess progress of students in their learning. Simple accountability

mechanisms developed and delivered through tablet use, as well as the creation of peer-support networks, help address this.

How we will achieve change:

In order to deliver the outcomes above, Fast Forward will undertake the following activities:

In support of outcome 1:

Delivery of enhanced teacher training and support programme: Implement the enhanced training for teachers in target community schools, involving 75 teachers and ultimately reaching 2,700 students, with emphasis on grades 1-4 (lower primary). Training will introduce teachers to new technology and equip them with i) effective context-specific pedagogical strategies for teaching literacy, ii) advanced strategies for teaching numeracy, iii) inquiry methods of teaching that encourage children to ask questions, iv) methods to encourage peer-to-peer interactions and group work, v) approaches for rights awareness and gender equality in particular, vi) strategies to empower students to take ownership of their learning, vi) classroom management and lesson planning (among other things). Teachers will have opportunities for continuous professional development, including activities in learning centres (see below) and monitoring visits to schools. To manage the risk of teacher turnover, headteachers and school coordinators will go through a train the trainer programme so they can deliver training to any new staff.

Equipment of Learning Centres (LCs): Develop three existing government-run “District Resource Centres” – each supporting community schools in the district – to include Mwabu solar-powered educational technology. This technology has been approved by the Ministry of Education for use in primary schools in Zambia. The technology includes teacher tablets (and projectors) and student tablets loaded with all lessons for all subjects for the seven-year Zambian primary curriculum in all Zambian official languages (including seven local languages). There are exercises after each lesson topic for students to complete. Teachers get the results of these assessments, and the tablets automatically assign students into Fast and Slow streams, with subsequent content tailored accordingly. Teachers will do their training (see above) in the LCs. Teachers/students will then attend LCs together and have access to resources for half-day sessions. Teachers will also be able to borrow a teacher tablet and projector for use in their school.

Introduction of Accountability Mechanisms in schools: Develop a culture of accountability among teachers, children and the community and within the staff of each school. Support existing and, where relevant, establish new Parent Community School Committees and Student Communities. Build a culture of diagnostic testing by teachers with periodic low-stakes testing and informal recording of grades to develop accountability to students. Provide external recognition for teachers with display of best practice and successes in prominent places in the community and/or school.

In support of outcome 2

Capacity-building inputs: Organise a series of capacity-building workshops which bring together project partners Suas, ZOCS, Mwabu and PESS to build the capacity of ZOCS in the areas of results-based management, monitoring and evaluation, and teacher training. The workshops will be complemented by ongoing contact between Suas staff (Suas International Programmes Manager and Suas’ Education Specialist) and ZOCS’ dedicated Fast Forward Project Officer. The workshops and ongoing support will focus on developing, among other things, ZOCS’ results-based

management approach, ZOCS' training programme, and ZOCS' plans to replicate this teacher-training approach in a further 35 districts in Zambia where ZOCS are currently supporting community schools/training teachers. Fast Forward will be reflected within ZOCS current advocacy strategy (targeted at local, provincial and national government, and other education actors) for greater support for community schools.

In support of project overall:

Project management including financial management: Agree MoUs with partners clarifying terms of partnerships and roles and responsibilities. Develop annual work plans including quarterly targets. Develop/review/follow up on quarterly narrative and financial reports. Complete audit on annual basis.

Evaluation: Contract independent evaluator at the outset of the project. Develop and implement plans to effectively measure the impact of this approach to training and supporting teachers to improve the educational outcomes of children in community schools. Implement evaluation plan.

ANNEX 2: RESULTS FRAMEWORK FOR THE FAST FORWARD PROJECT

Outcomes	Objectives	Outputs	Performance Indicators
1. Undertrained community school teachers are empowered to become inspiring and effective educators and give students a quality education	1.1 Teachers deliver high quality lessons and mentoring relevant to curriculum and ABCDE framework (academic, self-belief, critical thinking, digital and technological skills, equality and rights awareness)	1.1.1 District Resource Centres are fully equipped with learning technology	a) No of teacher tablets equipped in each District Resource Centre b) No of student tablets equipped in each District Resource Centre c) No of projectors equipped in each District Resource Centre d) No of District Resource Centres with solar installation
		1.1.2 Teacher training programme designed	Training programme designed, including learning objectives, session notes and learning materials
		1.1.3 Teachers complete redeveloped training programme	No and % of teachers (M/F) utilising knowledge and skills relevant to ABCDE framework in planning and delivering lessons
		1.1.4 Teachers participate in continuing professional development (CPD) activities beyond initial training	a) No and % of teachers (M/F) who are engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) relating to the ABCDE framework beyond initial training i.e. CPD groups or monitoring visits b) Quality of engagement in CPD activities
		1.1.5 Teachers use tablets and projectors with students in classrooms and/or in resource centres	No and % of teachers (M/F) utilising tablets and projectors outside of training (in classroom and/or in resource centres) - and average time spent
		1.1.6 Teachers and students use accountability mechanisms to get feedback from key stakeholders	a) No and % of teachers (M/F) using low-stakes testing b) No and % of schools with Parent Community School Committees and Student Committees - and quality of interaction
	1.2 Students (girls and boys) have improved learning outcomes (reading, mathematics) and demonstrate core knowledge, skills across all aspects of ABCDE framework.	1.2.1 Students participate in classes relevant to the following key areas: reading, mathematics	No and % of students (M/F) in targeted grades achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics.
		1.2.2 Students participate in classes relevant to the following key areas: self-belief, critical thinking, digital and technological skills, equality and rights awareness	No and % of students (M/F) demonstrating improvements in a) self-belief b) critical thinking skills c) digital and technological skills d) rights awareness

Outcomes	Objectives	Outputs	Performance Indicators
2. ZOCS have increased capacity to support under-resourced community schools in Zambia	2.1 ZOCS have increased capacity to deliver teacher training integrating, among other elements, digital technology	2.1.1 ZOCS staff have fully participated in capacity building programme and attained learning milestones relating to integrating digital technology in teacher training	No and % of relevant ZOCS staff demonstrating increased capacity in the area of teacher training incorporating technology as a result of capacity building inputs ZOCS staff are able to deliver this training without technical assistance by the end of the project
	2.2 ZOCS have increased capacity in the area of results based management, and an evidence base to inform their ongoing advocacy work for more supports for community schools in Zambia	2.2.1 ZOCS staff have fully participated in capacity-building programme and attained learning milestones relating to results based management	ZOCS has developed its organisational approach and toolkit for results-based management ZOCS There is an independent, credible evaluation of the project based on a robust monitoring and evaluation strategy
	2.3 ZOCS have developed plans to replicate this approach to teacher training in a further 50 districts in Zambia where they are currently supporting community schools/training teachers.	2.3.1 Replication plan has been developed and implemented	There is a solid plan as to how this project could be extended to the 50 districts where ZOCS is supporting community schools/teachers

ANNEX 3: SUAS MONITORING AND EVALUATION POLICY

Suas overall approach to monitoring and evaluation is guided by a number of key international standards and best practice approaches:

4.1 DAC Criteria

In developing Terms of Reference plans for evaluations, Suas takes specific reference to the ‘*DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance*’ as widely used within the development sector:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor;
- **Effectiveness:** A measure of the extent to which and aid / development activity attains its objectives;
- **Efficiency:** A measurement of the programme outputs in relation to the inputs (including the cost-effectiveness, timing and efficiency of process);
- **Impact:** The positive and negative changes produced by the intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended;
- **Sustainability:** Establishing whether the benefits of the activity are likely to continue after funding has been withdrawn or the programme has been completed (including both financial and environmental sustainability).

Evaluation questions and processes are specifically formulated with a view to assessing progress against each of these criteria, and evaluation reports are required to address each of these criteria.

4.1.1 Contribution and Attribution

In assessing progress against the DAC criteria, the degree to which progress (or lack of it) can be specifically attributed to the interventions of Suas and its partners may not be always clear, particularly where the interventions of a range of actors may be influencing the change processes in a particular area, or for a particular target group. Notwithstanding the complexities involved, Suas evaluation processes attempt to look at both contribution and attribution aspects of progress, as follows:

- The degree to which some or all of the changes (good or bad) may be directly attributed to Suas’ interventions, and / or
- The degree to which Suas’ actions may have contributed towards some or all of the changes, even if not wholly responsible for them.

4.2 The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness

Given that effectiveness is one of the DAC Criteria that Suas utilises to assess its work, the ongoing evolution of the international development effectiveness agenda is of particular relevance to all of Suas work, and to its monitoring and evaluation approach in particular. The Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness form a key reference point for the evaluation of its development work:

1. Respect and promote human rights and justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls’ rights
3. Focus on people’s empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote environmental sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realising positive sustainable change.

Many of these principles are already encapsulated in key Suas documents such as the Strategic Plan. The principles are specifically referred to in developing Terms of Reference (ToRs) and plans for evaluations, and in evaluation reports. The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, which incorporates the Istanbul Principles and provides guidance on how to achieve them, also provides a broader reference point for Suas' evaluation work.

4.3 Evaluation Tools and Methodologies

In addition to utilising the DAC criteria and being formally guided by the CSO Development Effectiveness Framework, the organisation also keeps abreast of the latest international developments in relation to monitoring and evaluation methodologies and tools. Suas does not prescribe a particular methodology to be used for all of its evaluations. Rather (and usually in consultation with the consultant or agency conducting the evaluation on its behalf), it seeks to identify a process and methodology that is appropriate to each individual evaluation situation and context.

4.3.1 Rainbow Framework Planning Tool

Given the wide array of evaluation methodologies and processes that currently exist, Suas will seek to use the recently developed Rainbow Framework Planning Tool produced by BetterEvaluation as a guide in designing and managing its evaluation processes according to the following stages outlined under that tool:

1. Managing the evaluation
2. Defining what is to be evaluated
3. Framing the boundaries of an evaluation
4. Describing activities, outcomes, impacts and context
5. Understanding causes of outcomes and impact
6. Synthesising data from one or more evaluations
7. Reporting and supporting the use of findings.

More information on this tool can be accessed online at this link:
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan>.