TERMS OF REFERENCE (TORs)

Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) for the Sustainable Management of Landscapes (SAMALA) Project

1 Programme Profile

Project Name: Sustainable Management of Landscapes (SAMALA)

Project Goal: The project seeks to support the Malawi Government to address land degradation by contributing to the restoration of degraded landscapes and promoting sustainable livelihoods in seven selected EPAs across Mzimba, Kasungu, Ntchisi, and Dowa districts.

Programme Consortium Members:

1. Total LandCare (TLC)
2. International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF)

Project Outcomes:

- **SO1**: Improved catchment management with sustained land productivity.
- **SO2**: Strengthened inclusive community governance structures and local institutions for sustainable landscape management.
- **SO3**: Increased land tenure security and community knowledge on existing regulatory frameworks.
- **SO4**: Diversified and strengthened livelihoods for targeted communities.

Beneficiary Target: 24,500 households

Location: Mzimba, Kasungu, Ntchisi, and Dowa

Project Period: 1st September 2022 – 31st August 2027

Evaluation Period: Mid-Term Evaluation to be conducted between October - November 2025

2 Context and Programme Background

Land degradation remains a serious challenge across Malawi. Most rural households are subsistence farmers with small land holdings of 0.8-1.2 hectares who are vulnerable to climate change. Most of the smallholder farmers are unable to make the critical trade-off between immediate short-term needs and sustained use of natural resources including land. The results limit their ability to manage and adapt to climate change, with alarming rates of environmental degradation. The effects are reflected in declining crop yields and soil fertility, food and nutrition insecurity, low household incomes, poor access to clean water, and reduced energy security among others.

In Malawi, loss of topsoil averages 29 tons ha-1 per annum with up to 100 tons ha-1 on steep hillsides. An analysis of soil erosion rates[1] in selected EPAs in Mzimba and Kasungu indicated soil erosion rates ranging from 1.07 to 10.0 tonnes/ha/year. Forests are also experiencing a high deforestation rate estimated at 2.8% representing an annual average loss of 250,000ha of forest cover. The attendant impacts on the environment threaten the function of watersheds with far-reaching effects on agriculture and livelihoods.

[1] Omuto CT and Vargas RR. 2019. Soil Loss Atlas of Malawi. 440 pp. Rome, FAO.

SAMALA project has been implementing interventions on sustainable land management to address land degradation in selected EPAs in Mzimba, Kasungu, Ntchisi, and Dowa districts. The project works with local structures from the district to the community level to ensure that the challenges being faced by the communities are addressed in a participatory way, and for the sustainability of the interventions/activities. All activities are streamlined and vetted through the District Agriculture Extension Coordination Committees (DAECC), District Executive Committees, (DEC), Area Development Committees (ADC), Area Stakeholder Panels (ASP), Village Development Committees (VDCs), Village Agriculture Committees (VACs) and other relevant structures. The project has been building the capacity of local structures to enable them carry out their roles and responsibilities and to ensure that issues of land degradation are addressed. The targeted households have been trained in sustainable land and water management practices, and catchment management using an integrated catchment management approach based on the **Malawi National Guidelines: Integrated Catchment Management and Rural Infrastructure Volumes I and II**. This requires conducting a participatory catchment evaluation and developing catchment management plans with clear lines of responsibility between the communities, project team, and other key stakeholders.

The proposed project design is well aligned with some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and relevant national policies and strategies. Overall, the project aligns to SDGs 2, 5, 13, 15, and 17. Nationally, the proposed action aligns and contributes significantly to the Malawi 2063, the National Forest policy, the National Climate Change Management Policy, the Malawi's National Adaptation Programme of Action, the National Agricultural Investment Program, and the National Agriculture Policy. The project is also aligned to the Flanders Malawi 2019-2023 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Development Cooperation and will contribute towards domains of change No. 3: Sustainable land management enables all farmers to ensure the sustainable use of land resources and to improve the resilience of their farms, and is also very well aligned to the Mission Strategy of the Embassy of Ireland, Lilongwe 2021-2026 which also focuses on empowerment of young women, and increased food and income security.

The project is now halfway through its implementation. A Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is therefore required to serve three interrelated purposes:

- **Accountability:** Provide donors, consortium partners, and government with a transparent assessment of progress, achievements, and use of resources.
- **Learning:** Generate evidence and insights to refine programme strategies, strengthen implementation, and inform opportunities for scaling, replication, and policy influence.
- **Adaptive management:** Support mid-course corrections to ensure the programme remains relevant, effective, and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

3 The Programme Strategy and Results Framework

3.1 General Objective

The overall objective of the project is to support the Malawi government in addressing land degradation. The objective is directly related to the Flanders Malawi 2019-2023 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Development Cooperation and will contribute towards domains of change No. 3: Sustainable land management enables all farmers to ensure the sustainable use of land resources and to improve the resilience of their farms. The project is also very well aligned to the Mission Strategy of the Embassy of Ireland, Lilongwe 2021-2026 which also focuses on empowerment of young women, and increased food and income security.

3.2 Program/Project Specific Objectives

The central objective is to contribute to the restoration of degraded landscapes to support sustainable livelihoods in 7 selected EPAs in Mzimba, Kasungu, Ntchisi and Dowa districts (Luwerezi and Khosolo EPAs in Mzimba, Chulu EPA in Kasungu, Kalira and Chikwatula EPAs in Ntchisi, and Nachisaka and Nalunga EPAs in Dowa). The project will focus on: 1) Improving catchment management with sustained land productivity; 2) Strengthening inclusive community governance structures and local institutions for sustainable management of landscapes; 3) Increasing land tenure security and community knowledge on existing regulatory frameworks; and 4) Diversification and strengthening of livelihoods.

SAMALA project will be guided by sustainable land management (SLM) principles of; a) land-user-driven and participatory approaches, b) integrated use of natural resources at ecosystem and farming systems levels, c) multi-level and multi-stakeholder involvement, and d) targeted policy and institutional support, including development of incentive mechanisms for SLM adoption and income generation at the local level.

3.3 Results

The central objective of the project will be achieved through the following four interlinked Strategic Objectives/Outcomes;

- **Specific Objective 1:** Improved catchment management with sustained land productivity
- **Specific Objective 2:** Strengthened inclusive community governance structures and local institutions for sustainable management of landscapes
- **Specific Objective 3:** Increased land tenure security and community knowledge on existing regulatory frameworks
- **Specific Objective 4:** Targeted communities have diversified and strengthened livelihoods

3.4 Beneficiaries And Target Groups

The project is targeting a total of 24,500 farming households, 7,000 in Mzimba, 3,500 in Kasungu, 7,000 in Ntchisi, 7,000 in Dowa. Out of the total targeted farmers, 60% will be women while 40% will be youth. Targeting also includes people living with Albinism, Disability, HIV and AIDS, and other marginalized groups among the targeted population.

In addition, the project is targeting community local governance structures (ADCs, VDCs, VNRMCs), especially those involved in natural resource use and management, and other local governance structures, community-based organizations (CBOs) as secondary beneficiaries of the project. The project is building their technical and governance capacities based on gaps identified through organizational capacity assessments.

4 Objectives of the Mid-Term Evaluation

4.1 Overall Objective

To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact prospects, and sustainability of the SAMALA project at mid-point, and to provide recommendations for improved delivery during the remaining period.

4.2 Specific Objectives

- **Assess progress towards outcomes**: Examine achievements made under each project outcome, compared to targets in the results framework. An assessment of all overachievements and underachievement, and way forward should be clearly presented. Gender dynamics around participation in key intervention areas i.e. catchment management, land registration and access to finance and markets should be clearly

articulated. Where intervention adoption is concerned, the MTE survey should clearly define and measure it accordingly.

- **Evaluate relevance**: Assess the continued relevance of project strategies, approaches, and interventions in addressing land degradation and community needs.
- **Examine effectiveness**: Analyze how far the project has achieved its objectives in catchment management, natural resource management and governance, land tenure security, and livelihood diversification.
- **Review efficiency**: Assess the use of financial, human, and material resources, including value for money and cost-effectiveness.
- **Assess sustainability**: Determine the likelihood of sustained impact beyond the project, focusing on community ownership, capacity of local institutions, and policy alignment.
- **Cross-cutting issues**: Assess gender equality, youth empowerment, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and climate resilience mainstreaming.
- **Identify challenges and lessons learned**: Provide actionable recommendations for adapting project strategies and improving implementation for the remaining period. Recommendations should be prioritized into short-, medium-, and long-term actions to ensure practical uptake, ranging from immediate improvements to strategic adjustments, and longer-term systemic changes.

5 Methodology

The evaluation design should be based on a theory of change framework and apply internationally recognized evaluation criteria, such as the OECD-DAC framework. In addition, the methodology must ensure clear sample size design (e.g. household survey of at least X households per district or strata) to ensure representativeness. The consultant(s) will apply a **mixed-methods approach** combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, including but not limited to:

- **Document Review**: Project reports, baseline study, monitoring data, policy documents, and other secondary sources.
- **Household Survey**: Representative sample to measure progress on outcome and output indicators.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**: With consortium staff, government officials, community leaders, private sector partners, and other stakeholders.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**: With beneficiaries (men, women, youth, vulnerable groups).
- **Case Studies**: Success stories or illustrative examples of impact.
- **Participatory Approaches**: Engage communities and local governance structures in reflecting on progress and challenges.

Triangulation of methods will be explicitly required to strengthen the validity and credibility of the evaluation findings. By cross-checking and comparing evidence from different angles, the evaluation will be able to confirm consistency, highlight discrepancies, and ensure a more robust and trustworthy analysis. In addition, Data must be disaggregated by sex and age wherever relevant, to ensure inclusive analysis and capture differences across gender and age groups.

6 Scope of the Evaluation

The MTE will cover all project outcomes across the four target districts and seven EPAs. Key areas of assessment include:

- Catchment management practices and land productivity.
- Adoption of sustainable land and water management practices.
- Technical capacity, functionality, and inclusiveness of governance structures in SLM and Natural resource Management.
- Progress on land tenure security knowledge and land registration.
- Livelihood diversification and market linkages.
- Integration of gender, youth, and social inclusion.

The MTE will also assess project governance and consortium functioning, focusing on how well TLC, ICRAF, and other partners coordinate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making. It will also review the effectiveness of management systems—planning, communication, reporting, and accountability—that enable collaboration. In addition, the evaluation will examine unintended outcomes, both positive (e.g., spillovers or innovations) and negative (e.g., risks or adverse impacts), to provide a balanced view of project achievements and challenges.

7 Deliverables and Timeline

The evaluation will run for **45 days**. Key deliverables include:

1. **Inception Report** (within 10 days of contract signing)
    - Evaluation design, methodology, sampling, tools, and work plan.
2. **Preliminary Findings Presentation** (following fieldwork)
    - Initial findings, lessons, and emerging recommendations for validation.
3. **Draft Mid-Term Evaluation Report** (within 35 days of contract signing)
    - Comprehensive analysis with evidence-based findings.
4. **Final MTE Report** (within 45 days of contract signing)
    - A stakeholder validation workshop will be held before finalization of the report to strengthen ownership and uptake of findings.
    - Report structure: Executive Summary, Introduction, Purpose, Methodology, Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, Annexes.

    Note: The Draft and Final Mid-Term Evaluation Reports should be concise, with a maximum length of 40–50 pages, excluding annexes.
5. **Knowledge Products**
    - PowerPoint presentation for dissemination.
    - Two-page policy/brief summarizing key findings and recommendations.

8 Roles and Responsibilities

Consultant(s)

- Lead the MTE process.
- Design MTE methodology.
- Desing digital data collection tools and
- Collect and analyse data.
- Produce and present reports.

Note: The **Evaluation Team will maintain full independence** throughout the evaluation process to safeguard the credibility, impartiality, and objectivity of the results. Independence will be ensured by avoiding conflicts of interest, applying transparent and consistent methodologies, and maintaining professional distance from project management and implementation structures. This will help guarantee that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are unbiased, evidence-based, and fully reliable for decision-making.

SAMALA Consortium

- Provide project documents and monitoring data.
- Facilitate access to districts, communities, and stakeholders.
- Review and provide feedback on deliverables.

9 Required Expertise

The Consultant must be a suitably qualified team of individuals or consulting firm with the following qualifications.

- The team must include holders of an advanced degree in Development Studies, Nutrition, Economics, Agriculture Economics, Environmental Management, Agribusiness, Land Management/Administration, Statistics, and other relevant qualifications.
- At least 7 -10 years' experience in evaluations (preferably mid-term or end-line) of large-scale natural resource management or livelihoods projects.
- Strong skills in quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Experience in using digital data collection tools.
- Experience with gender analysis, climate resilience, and governance assessments.
- Proven ability in report writing and presentation.
- Clear understanding of the Malawi agriculture, climate change, and land tenure security policies and regulatory environment is required.

10 Budget and Payment

The consultant shall propose a detailed budget covering professional fees, field costs, logistics, and analysis. Payment will be made as follows:

- **40%** upon approval of inception report.
- **30%** upon submission of draft MTE report.
- **30%** upon submission and acceptance of final MTE report.

Disclaimer

TLC is not responsible for the security, medical care, terminal or other benefits apart from those specified in this contract. In case of injury or death arising from a motor vehicle accident, the Consultant will be covered through comprehensive motor vehicle insurance.

11 Application Process

Interested applicants (firms or individuals) should submit:

- Technical and financial proposals.
- CVs of team members.
- Work plan and timelines.
- At least one sample report of a similar evaluation conducted previously.

Applications clearly labelled **"SAMALA Project Mid-Term Evaluation - 2025"**, should be submitted to the address below. Closing date for receiving applications is **23rd October 2025**.

The Internal Procurement Committee

Total Land Care

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