

Study Lead

Terms of Reference (ToR)

A. Summary

Job Title	Study Lead
Project Title	Scoping Study for Inclusive Livelihoods Programme in Maharashtra
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To scope, identify and analyze the current socio-economic status and structural factors reinforcing poverty among the extreme poor and vulnerable/marginalized households, particularly women, across 2 districts in Maharashtra- To record insights from government, public and private stakeholders on their experiences in the ultra-poor landscape- To propose a poverty alleviation/graduation model adapted for the extreme poor in Maharashtra
Location	Remote
Duration	3 months
Start Date	1 May 2024
End Date	1 August 2024
Reporting to	Radhika Agashe, Executive Director
Languages Required	Fluent Hindi & English. Proficiency in spoken Marathi desirable.

B. Project Description / Background

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

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

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

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

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

C. Study Objectives

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

D. Scope of Work & Outputs / Expected Deliverables

ACCESS Development Services seeks to hire a Study lead to train, guide and support the team who will be conducting the study. The Study lead is required to assess the design efficacy of the research study and provide feedback/inputs on the same.

1. Lead in the development of a full research methodology for the study and guide the team in designing of instruments for data collection and analysis
 - a. Develop a proposed research methodology including sampling, approach to questionnaire design, survey tools, procedures and protocols for listing, field work, quality assurance and data entry, production of survey weights
 - b. Engage with relevant govt. bodies and ACCESS UPGI team to generate agreement on a final research methodology
 - c. Conduct small scale pre-testing of the survey; conduct large scale piloting
 - d. Finalize survey instruments and field manual with the team
2. Conduct and lead an inception meeting with the MSRLM team and Study team to calibrate and finalize the research methodology
3. Provide technical guidance and training to the team for conducting the study
4. Provide initial handholding support to the team in undertaking field research
5. Lead and implement a pilot for the study
6. Oversee and monitor the team's progress and provide valuable inputs
7. Oversee and guide the team in holding focused-group discussions (FGDs)/consultations with key stakeholders to triangulate and supplement the findings of the secondary research
8. Conduct key stakeholder interviews for the study purpose; interview officials of government departments/agencies (namely MSRLM, rural development, SC/ST/Tribal development, SC/ST Finance Corporation, women and child development, social welfare and justice, etc.) at state, district and block levels and with representatives of 2-3 NGOs/CSOs working with the extreme poor
9. Guide the team in data consolidation & analysis
10. Review the draft report prepared by the team
11. Prepare a policy brief with recommendations and proposed interventions
12. Design and host a dissemination workshop in Mumbai basis findings from the study with support of the team

E. Qualification & Experience Required

- A Master's Degree in Social Sciences, or relevant discipline
- 10-15 years of professional experience in the field of Social Sciences with a good knowledge of rural poverty and livelihood landscape
- Prior experience in implementing research methodologies including qualitative data collection methods such as surveys, FGD and KIIs at the local level. Published research is a definite advantage
- Sound assessment, analytical, statistical and planning skills
- Fluency in Hindi & English languages. Proficiency in spoken Marathi is desirable.
- Proficiency in MS Office
- Excellent research, communication and writing skills
- Ability to work independently with a high degree of responsibility, in a flexible manner
- Flexible and willing to travel as required

