



QUALITATIVE STUDY #1 SCOPE OF WORK

Program

Promoting the Economic Revival of Micro Businesses and Agriculture II (PERMA II)

Implemented By: Mercy Corps Iraq

Project Locations: Ninawa (Al-Hamdaniya), Salah al-Din, (Baiji, Samara, Tikrit)

Project Start Date: 10 March 2022

Project End Date: 09 February 2025

Study Title: Assessing farmers' Adaptation to climate change: Practices, Options, Constraints and Capacities.

Study Start Date: TBD 2023

Study End Date: TBD 2024

Funded By: Agence Française de Développement (AFD)

Study Purpose

Mercy Corps is seeking an individual, team, or firm to design and carry out an action research study on practices, options, constraints and capabilities within the Climate resilience Agriculture realm to inform its current program PERMA II as well as future market-based interventions. The ultimate outcome of this study is to provide Mercy Corps with practical, evidence-based solutions to enhance its climate resilience programming. It is expected that this study will provide insights into the kind of inputs, practices, and innovations that promote climate resilient behaviors among smallholder farmers and other market actors and how particular inputs and climate issues more broadly are influencing the purchase practices among consumers. Additionally, the study should examine the effectiveness of approaches to climate resilience agriculture that are currently being used by PERMA and other actors.

On the other hand, the study should inform overall understanding of Climate Resilient dimensions from the water resources use and agriculture and proposed actions therein (physical, technological, investment, regulatory, market). Therefore, the outcomes be used to form the basis for facilitating dialogue with the various actors; Private Sector actors (Agribusinesses), Government (national and or governorate level, Donor community, INGOs and CBOs, Academic, Research and Farmers Institutions, Local communities and Individuals).

Program Background and Details

Background

Mercy Corps is a non-profit organization made up of a team of more than 5,500 global humanitarians who partner with communities, corporations, and governments to transform lives in more than 40 countries around the world. Our mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities .

Mercy Corps has been present in Iraq since 2003, which has allowed the team to develop a broad network of community relationships and a deep understanding of conflict-affected populations'

needs. In 2019, Mercy Corps started implementing a market system approach through its PERMA I program. PERMA I is a twin program of PERMA II and it was implemented in Al-Hamdaniya district in Ninawa from 2019 to 2022.

Program Description

The Promoting the Economic Revival of Micro Businesses and Agriculture 2 (PERMA 2) programme will transform the lives of over 10,000 vulnerable households in Al-Hamdaniya district of Ninawa, and Baiji, Tikrit and Samarra districts of Salah al-Din, through an integrated and inclusive approach to rehabilitate economic activities in the agriculture sector by linking agriculture producers and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with access to financial services, developing their capacity to improve revenue, and fostering social cohesion to rebuild economic relationships. By strengthening these functions simultaneously, PERMA 2 will aim to 1.) continue to strengthen the financial inclusion of agricultural MSMEs; 2.) develop more inclusive agricultural value chains for smallholder farmers, particularly returnees, women and youth; and 3.) strengthen the social cohesion between ethnic minorities, as well as returnees and remainees in Ninawa and Salah al-Din.

PERMA 2 is facilitated through a consortium, led by Mercy Corps and implemented through a partnership with Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH) and Public Aid Organization (PAO).

Theory of Change:

PERMA II's goal is to improve the resilience capacity of farmer households in Al-Hamdaniya district of Ninawa, and Baiji, Tikrit and Samarra districts of Salah al-Din, by addressing system level constraints in the governance, agriculture, and financial sectors in order to achieve inclusive economic growth for over 10,000 farmer households. This goal is underpinned by the following Theory of Change (ToC):

IF the capacities of the agriculture, finance and governance systems are strengthened using a climate sensitive, financially inclusive, gender, youth and conflict sensitive approach and **IF** investments are made in agricultural infrastructure, private sector development, quality and affordable inputs and technology, and financial services **THEN** smallholder farmers' productivity and income will increase and they will be more resilient to future shocks and stresses.

PERMA II consists of the below three main objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1: Financial institutions are providing appropriate and affordable financial services to enable MSMEs to start, re-start and grow agricultural activities

OBJECTIVE 2: Small-scale farmers have improved access to services, inputs, information, infrastructure and markets that increase their productivity and profitability

OBJECTIVE 3: Local institutions and leaders are promoting intra- and inter-community interactions that contribute to the reintegration of returnees in the agricultural sector and conflict-resolution

Climate Change context in Iraq

Iraq is one of the countries in the world that have been most harshly impacted by climate change; manifesting in severely reduced precipitation, increase in temperature ranges with extended drought seasons, as well as downpour and flash floods, sand and dust storms, and other events. In 2021, Iraq experienced its second driest season in 40 years due to record low rainfall. This sharply exacerbates the water scarcity crisis that the country has been suffering from for some time. When compounded with the water policies of neighbouring countries, water scarcity is expected to worsen. Over the last 40 years, water flow from the Euphrates and Tigris, which provide up to 98% of Iraq's surface water, have decreased by 30-40%. It is predicted that the

impact of climate change and water scarcity will continue to gradually weigh heavily on rural communities accentuating their vulnerability.

At the agricultural sector level, the rising soil salinity from apparently bad farming practices amongst other factors, intermittent water scarcity, the general effect of the past insurgencies, unrestricted Iran border on movement of agricultural input, and the impasse on dollar use further challenge the ability of agricultural communities to meet basic needs. Farmers continue to struggle to make profits and expand production in an evolving agricultural landscape. Failure of the agricultural sector will most probably continue to lead to increased dependency on expensive imported food, seeds and other Agri Inputs and thus threatens the livelihoods and food security of millions of Iraqis.

Climate Resilience and or Climate Smart Agriculture

The climate crisis has put significant pressure on farmers and market actors to identify and promote affordable and profitable pathways for adaptation without compromising food security needs in the country.

Efforts such as supporting/strengthening climate resilient local seed systems, , application of organic fertilizers, and many other forms of best farming practices are always alluded as part solutions to climate change adaptation measures. It is also notable that if farmers are to resist, absorb, and respond to climatic events, they require integrated and flexible solutions and getting the right products and information to farmers in a timely manner will require a more robust and resilient Market Systems that on the other hand support building resilience of the people who most likely to be affected by the effect of climatic events.

Study Design

Objectives

1. To understand constraints and opportunities in promoting Climate resilient agriculture in Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.
2. To identify capacities and constraints of key market actors responsible for promoting climate resilient inputs and extension services
3. To identify and present best options of Input products and services, practices and innovations that support Climate Resilient Agriculture, highlighting factors for farmers' choices, and the respective engagement of the agribusinesses.
4. To further validate Climate Resilient Input products and services, practices and innovations that PERMA has been promoting and what other recommendations to consider.
5. To understand existing (or non) policy frameworks and how smallholder farmers are impacted by its existence (or not).

Study Questions:

- What are the key constraints and opportunities to climate resilience in Salah Al Din and Ninewa governorates of Iraq?

- What are the right inputs (Including irrigation and farm equipment), practices and innovations options that promote climate-resilient agriculture amongst the farmers?
- What are the factors that influence (or can influence) farmers' adaptation choices?
- What is the work that PERMA and other Market actors are already doing that potentially influence the adaptive capabilities of the smallholder farmers (models that support improving access to the inputs, practices and innovations)? What is the potential for local seed systems?
- What institutional and policy frameworks do exist to influence smallholder farmers' resilience to climate change in Salah Al Din and Ninewa governorates of Iraq?

Note: these questions are expected to be adjusted in collaboration with the consultant or service provider.

Methodology

It is our expectation that in addition to general knowledge related to the study topic, this study will review the current practices and produce practical recommendations that can be used for improvement. We anticipate a fully qualitative or mixed-methods design that incorporates a variety of data sources and analysis strategies. These may include, question-based approach, through focus group discussions by preferably the use of Climate Vulnerability Capacity Assessment tool, Key Informant Interviews with the various actors; PERMA partners and non partners Private Sector actors (Agribusinesses), Government (national and or governorate level, Donor community, INGOs and CBOs, Academic, Research and Farmers Institutions, Local communities and Individuals), farmer interviews or any other suitable semi-structured stakeholder interviews, and/or participant surveys.

Data Analysis

It is expected that the consultant(s) will organize, code and analyze the data collected, using appropriate quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software, while qualitative data will be analyzed thematically to identify key patterns, emerging themes and relationships. The analysis will provide a better understanding of the impacts of climate change, current local adaptation capacities, opportunities, gender dynamics and agricultural packages (climate-smart practices, adapted inputs, financing products etc.) to improve local adaptation in the study areas.

Study Roles and Responsibilities

Team Composition

Ideally, the study will be led by the external consultant and their in-country team. Mercy Corps' preference is that the selected consultant will draw on their own resources to hire and manage enumerators and data collection processes independently. However, in the event that this is not possible or unnecessarily prohibitive, Mercy Corps team members and our contracted enumerators may support the study's data collection (though tools, sampling, and associated planning will remain the responsibility of the consultant). If the consultant hopes to draw on Mercy Corps' resources to support data collection, payments to enumerators will be managed independently by Mercy Corps and will be deducted from this activity's allocated budget. In this scenario, the applicant should still provide an estimated budget for these efforts (based on the rest of the proposed bid information) which will be considered by Mercy Corps during the application's study.

The team is expected to consist of members with thorough contextual knowledge and study expertise. Mercy Corps anticipates the team will be made up of either all local or a combination of local and international members, and will have equal gender representation. Key team members should have a demonstrated track record of research and study excellence, and should be well-prepared to conduct study in a complex context. The composition and number of team members is deliberately not defined.

The consultant will report to Mercy Corps Iraq's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Manager, who will facilitate communication with the in-country Program and MEL teams, as well as Regional/Global Technical Leads, as needed.

The consultant will work closely with Mercy Corps' Consortium Manager, Agribusiness Manager, Program Performance and Quality Director, and Deputy MEL Manager. These individuals will be involved in: (a) deliverable reviews, (b) coordination and communication with local stakeholders, and/or (c) navigation of program documentation and materials.

Desired Qualifications

Essential:

- Demonstrated expertise and experience conducting research tied to market systems, systemic change and value chain assessments
- Demonstrated expertise in smallholder agriculture, and
- At least three years of experience designing qualitative and quantitative data tools and research methodologies;

Other desirable:

- Language expertise in English (required) and Arabic (highly desirable);
- Experience working in the Middle East (required) and contextual knowledge of Iraq and the implementation areas (preferred);
- Prior work or study experience in Iraq (preferred); and
- Exceptional report-writing skills.

Study Deliverables and Timelines

Mercy Corps anticipates the consultant will work for an estimated **30 working days**, from February 29, 2024 until March 30, 2024 (inclusive). The main study period is expected to begin on X with an introductory meeting between the consultant and Mercy Corps' program and MEL teams. The consultant will work until X, when the final study report (adjusted according to Mercy Corps' feedback) will be submitted. This is an estimate and can be adjusted in initial consultations with the external consultant. An invoice for services should be provided to Mercy Corps when the final study report is submitted, and is due no later than March 31, 2024.

Responsible Party	Deliverable	Duration	ESTIMATED DELIVERABLE DEADLINES
External consultant	INCEPTION REPORT: Following desk review of program documents (e.g., proposals, implementation plans, strategy documents, existing databases and datasets, and the Phase I study) the consultant will develop an inception report that outlines the study design, methodologies, and all study tools, as well as work plan and GANTT chart	4 days	TBD
Mercy Corps	Mercy Corps to provide feedback on the inception report.	3 days	TBD

External consultant	Address feedback on the inception report and study tools, and resubmit for approval	2 days	TBD
External consultant	STUDY INSTRUMENTS: Instruments finalized, translated into Arabic, and tested.	4 days	TBD
External consultant	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS: Oversee data collection and analysis, including hiring and training enumerators and pre-testing data collection instruments	10 days	TBD
External consultant	DRAFT REPORT: Prepare the draft study report, including an executive summary.	3 days	TBD
Mercy Corps	Provide detailed feedback on draft study report	3 days	TBD
External consultant	FINAL REPORT AND SLIDE DECK: Finalize study report and incorporate Mercy Corps' feedback. Prepare a separate slide deck with talking points that summarize key findings and lessons learned.	3 days	TBD
Mercy Corps	Review the modified final report and slide deck	3 day	TBD
External consultant	PRESENTATION: Conduct a presentation of findings and learning for key Mercy Corps personnel and stakeholders.	1 day	TBD

Key Deliverables

1. **Inception Report**
2. **Final Report, Full Length**
3. **Short Report (standalone document)**
4. **Presentation of Findings Slide Deck**
5. **Raw Data and Analyses**
6. **Study Instruments and Data Collection Tools**

Final Report Format

The final report should not exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes and appendices. The content of the written report should be coherently structured with a logical progression. Data and information should be presented, analyzed, and interpreted clearly and systematically, with a clear line of evidence supporting the report's conclusions and recommendations. The basic structure of the report should resemble the following:

7. **Cover Page**
8. **List of Acronyms**
9. **Table of Contents**
10. **Executive Summary** (5 pages maximum): This section should serve as a clear and concise, stand-alone document that gives readers the essential contents of the study report, and should include a summary of major findings, lessons learned, and recommendations.
11. **Background**
12. **Methodology and Limitations:** This section should provide sufficient information for readers to judge the accuracy of the report and its findings. It should address constraints and limitations of the methodology, and the implications of these limitations on the study's findings (including if and why any of the study's findings are inconclusive).
13. **Findings/Results:** This section should provide answers to the study's questions and should include data represented in tables, charts, graphs, and other figures. Additionally, contextual analysis and explanations of the data should be provided in narrative form.

14. **Synthesis, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned:** This section should interpret the study's data and results, and make concrete recommendations for current or future program improvements. Focus should also be given on drawing out organizational lessons learned, and generally commenting on the compiled data and results. Everything presented in this section should be directly linked to information presented in the study's Results section.
15. **Success Stories, and Best Practice Cases:** Highlight at least two specific participants, interventions, and/or locations and discuss, in detail, what was effective in these cases and the ways in which they exemplify good practice.
16. **Annexes, and Appendices:** These additional files should include: (a) all data collection instruments in English and their Arabic translations, (b) a list of stakeholder groups detailed by number and type of interactions; (c) this scope of work (SOW), (d) qualitative protocols developed and used in the study, (e) data sets (these can be provided in electronic format), and (f) required photographs, participant profiles, or other special documentation needed.

Study Logistics

Costs associated with travel are the responsibility of the consultant. The consultant will be responsible for arranging their own accommodation, though Mercy Corps can provide guidance and recommendations if needed. The consultant is also responsible for arranging their own airfare and in-country transportation. Mercy Corps can support access to field and implementation sites.

Mercy Corps' MEL and PERMA Program teams will be available to work directly with the consultant throughout the duration of the study, and can answer questions as they emerge.

Assessment & Award of the Assignment

Application Guidelines

Interested applicants should submit a technical and financial proposal to Mercy Corps (not more than 20 pages) that includes the following:

1. Consultant profile, including list of similar assignments (preferably with INGOs) and CVs of key study team members
2. Technical proposal detailing the methodology and its responsiveness to the SOW;
3. At least one sample study report or a similar assessment (preferably in Iraq);
4. Project timeline and work plan;
5. At least two references for similar work completed;
6. Full financial proposal, including a detailed budget with all associated expenses (provide breakdowns: international and national flights, accommodation, data collection etc.); and

For national firms: If contracted and once the assignment is completed, Mercy Corps is not responsible for any challenges that the firm might encounter while withdrawing the released amount from their bank accounts or the USD/IQD exchange rate used by banks due to the current USD liquidation issue in Iraq. However, Mercy Corps remains open to arrange the contract in IQD using the Central bank of Iraq's (CBI) official exchange rate.

Application Deadline: Applications will close 10 days after this opportunity is posted

Mercy Corps will evaluate the submitted technical and financial proposals, and award the assignment based on technical and financial feasibility. Mercy Corps reserves the right to accept or reject one or all proposals received without assigning any reason and is not bound to accept the lowest or the highest bidder. Only those consultants shortlisted will be contacted. Any subcontracting under this study consultancy will not be accepted.

Application Guidelines

Criteria	Weight
Consultant profile and expertise, based on an overview profile and the team's CVs	15%
Technical proposal, including methodology and its responsiveness to SOW	20%
Quality of sample study and research pieces	20%
Timeline and Work Plan	15%
At least two references for similar work completed	10%
Price/Cost	20%
Total	100%