
TERMS OF REFERENCE: IMPACT EVALUATION SURVEY OF THE OPTIM PROJECT, PHASE II

1. Background

The OPTIM Project - “Opportunities through Technologies and Innovation in Moldova” - is a market systems development (MSD) project aiming at contributing towards the creation of improved economic opportunities for Moldovan women and men, with particular focus on excluded groups, through addressing the constraints of the economy in a sustainable and inclusive manner. By now, it had solidified over 46 partnerships, impacting over 2,500 direct beneficiaries, with a diverse range of stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, government, entrepreneurs, community and youth leaders to create a critical mass able to initiate a positive change and work together on addressing the market deficiencies that prevent inclusive growth. OPTIM is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, implemented by *HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Zurich Sucursala Chisinau*.

By the end of 2026, the OPTIM Project will conclude Phase II, implemented during the period 2023–2026. Implemented under a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach, an impact evaluation plays a critical role in assessing not only the results achieved, but also the extent to which systemic change has been initiated or advanced within the targeted market systems. It goes beyond measuring direct beneficiary outcomes and seeks to understand whether there are signs of broader, lasting change, including the adoption and replication of new practices, increased investment by market actors, and improved access to services for target groups.

2. Objective of the assignment

The objective of the impact evaluation is to assess the extent to which the OPTIM Project achieved its intended objectives and outcomes and contributed to systemic changes among its target groups during Phase II (2023–2026).

The evaluation will assess changes experienced by direct and indirect beneficiaries, including individuals, businesses, partners, and other relevant market actors engaged through the project interventions. It will also assess broader systemic effects within the targeted market systems, including changes in practices, behaviours, partnerships, service provision, and market functions.

The evaluation will specifically aim to:

- Assess the extent to which the project achieved its intended objectives and outcomes;
- Measure key economic and socio-economic changes associated with the project interventions, including employment, income, productivity, business performance, and access to services;
- Assess sustainability of results and indications of systemic change within the targeted market systems;
- Identify key achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and unintended effects;
- Assess perceptions of relevance, effectiveness, and value of the project among beneficiaries and stakeholders;
- Generate evidence-based findings and practical recommendations to inform future programming and strategic decision-making.

The assignment will include the following components:

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

The contractor will conduct quantitative data collection among selected project beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders using structured survey tools agreed with the OPTIM Project team. The contractor will be responsible for sampling, data collection, data cleaning, analysis, and presentation of findings.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The contractor will conduct qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with selected beneficiaries, partners, market actors, and other relevant stakeholders to better understand perceptions of change, sustainability of results, systemic effects, enabling and constraining factors, and lessons learned. The qualitative component should complement and validate quantitative findings through triangulation and deeper contextual analysis.

The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The methodology should enable triangulation of findings and assess the project's contribution to observed changes.

3. Main tasks

The selected company will be responsible for the design and implementation of the impact evaluation, including the following tasks:

- Develop a detailed mixed-methods impact evaluation methodology, including quantitative and qualitative approaches, sampling strategy, data collection methods, triangulation approach, limitations, assumptions, and validation process;
- Design and develop data collection tools in coordination with the OPTIM Project team, including structured questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussion guides targeting relevant beneficiaries and stakeholders;
- Conduct quantitative and qualitative data collection with project beneficiaries, partners, market actors, and other relevant stakeholders, ensuring data quality, integrity, confidentiality, and ethical compliance throughout the process
- Process, clean, consolidate, and analyse collected data and maintain a comprehensive electronic database of evaluation findings;
- Analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative findings, including identification of key trends, project contributions to change, systemic effects, sustainability of results, lessons learned, and intended and unintended effects of the interventions;
- Facilitate two validation workshops with relevant target groups and stakeholders to present preliminary findings, validate conclusions, and gather additional feedback;
- Prepare and submit a final analytical impact evaluation report presenting the evaluation methodology, findings, analysis, conclusions, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations for future programming and strategic decision-making.

4. Qualification Requirements

The company applying must demonstrate:

- Proven experience in conducting impact evaluation surveys, including mixed methods approaches combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis;
- Experience in evaluating economic development, private sector development, and market systems development (MSD) interventions;
- Experience working with donor-funded projects;
- Strong capacity in survey design, data collection, and analysis;
- A qualified team with relevant expertise in evaluation and research;

- Successful track record with similar assignments (references required);
- Ability to ensure data quality, ethics, and confidentiality throughout the assignment.

5. Deliverables

The selected company will be expected to deliver the following:

- Inception report, including detailed evaluation methodology, workplan, sampling approach, data collection methods, and evaluation framework;
- Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools, developed in coordination with the OPTIM Project team;
- Cleaned and consolidated electronic database containing quantitative and qualitative evaluation data;
- Summary presentation of preliminary findings for validation workshops;
- Final analytical impact evaluation report, including methodology, findings, analysis, conclusions, lessons learned, limitations, and recommendations.

6. Time frame of the assignment

The contractor will be expected to implement all activities specified under deliverables between July 2026 and November 2026. The contractor will work under the *HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Zurich Sucursala Chisinau*. Exact timeframe for deliverables will be mutually agreed before contract signature.

7. Financial Offer

The Financial offer must be presented in MDL. The fees proposed in this offer should be all inclusive; the contractor will cover all costs to perform their tasks (e.g. office accommodation, transport, internet access and equipment, administrative and secretarial support, interpretation etc.). Helvetas is exempt from VAT, thus the fees offered should be without VAT. The contractor is responsible for all other taxes and duties in compliance with the legislation of the country.