



Terms of Reference – Forus Evaluation of National Projects scheme

September 2020

Forus is an innovative global network empowering civil society for effective social change. It gathers 69 National NGO Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Pacific. With funding support from the European Commission and the French Development Agency, Forus is operating a sub-granting scheme for members to lead their own national projects.

Forus is recruiting a consultant(s) to conduct an **evaluation of its sub-granting scheme: to extract actional recommendations and learning, work to improve Forus' tools for the scheme, and develop an overall monitoring & evaluation framework, with the objective to improve and strengthen similar schemes in the future.**

1. Background

Forus' capacity development strategy builds upon the expertise existing in the network. It aims to support national NGO platforms to be stronger and more effective, while strengthening their capacities to engage with Forus and thus contribute to the network's effectiveness. By developing the capacities of national platforms, Forus contributes to strengthening civil society in different countries around the world, promoting the democratic participation of civil society as well as increasing their ability to hold governments to account and to build joint initiatives.

Forus' support to its members includes technical and financial support. Access to funding and to capacity development through Forus are highly valued by members of the network. Since 2018, Forus has launched 4 cycles of calls for national projects, through which 46 projects are funded. A total of 49 Forus members receive support through the scheme, as 3 of the 46 projects are in consortium between 2 members. The value of projects is generally around EUR 20,000, with approximately 80% of the funding from Forus, and the remaining 20% as co-funding from the member. The key donors funding Forus to implement the scheme are the European Union and the French Development Agency; as a result, national projects follow these donors' compliance requirements.

National projects focus on one or several of four priority areas:

- 54% in Communications and strengthening national platforms' member engagements
- 46% in Advocacy and Partnerships

- 37% in Leadership and Governance of National Platforms
- 22% in Resource mobilization, financial management and accountability

The geographic distribution of the national projects for all the four cycles is:

- 44% in Africa
- 22% in Latin America
- 22% in Europe
- 12% in Asia

Forus' sub-granting scheme is implemented using member-led, inclusive and participatory approaches. Members can submit a project proposal in English, French or Spanish. Projects are selected or prioritised by a Peer Support Committee, formed by individuals who are part of the staff or governance of Forus members. The Peer Committee assesses the project and decides to: (1) support in the corresponding cycle; (2) send personalized feedback and recommendations for improvement; or (3) propose a 1.5-day technical support by an external consultant to review & adapt the project.

Forus will launch a fifth call for national projects in March 2021 and fund new projects which will be implemented over a 12-months period.

This evaluation will extract learnings on the effectiveness and impact of the sub-granting scheme, presenting recommendations to Forus that can be integrated into the 2021 call for projects, as well as a new framework for monitoring & evaluation of the projects. These recommendations will enable Forus to adapt and improve its sub-granting scheme, in order to better meet the needs and expectations of members. The tools developed or improved by the consultants will be used in the 2021 call for projects. The monitoring & evaluation framework will be embedded into Forus' wider framework for measuring progress towards its 2021-2025 Strategy.

2. Analytical focus

The evaluation aims to extract learning and actionable recommendations regarding Forus' sub-granting scheme, with a focus on 2 areas of questioning:

1) Effectiveness and impact of the scheme

The evaluation will aim to extract good practices and elements to be improved from the scheme, in order to formulate an overall assessment of its effectiveness and impact, as well as to produce actionable recommendations. The consultants will propose a methodology and criteria for assessing the effectiveness and impact of the scheme. The consultant will work closely with the Forus Secretariat to extract findings and review the tools & documents for the scheme.

Questions to be explored include:

- How effective is Forus' national projects scheme in supporting members to implement their own initiatives?

- How effective is the scheme in terms of developing the capacities of Forus members?
- How effective is the scheme in reaching the objectives expected by the members?
- What are the impacts of the scheme on members? How can these impacts be sustained?
- What are some of the good practices of the scheme? What are some of the practices to be improved?
- How can the scheme be adapted to better meet members' needs and demands?
- Is the Peer Support Committee fit for purpose? How can the Peer Support Committee be more effective?
- How can the scheme be simplified in order to decrease the reporting, compliance and administrative burden on members?
- What kind of capacity development actions could Forus develop to better accompany members implementing national projects?
- What synergies can be identified to better leverage the experiences of members participating in the scheme and ensure cross-learning benefitting the wider network?
- What is the value for money of the Forus national projects scheme?
- What specific value do members perceive compared to other support they receive from other sources?

2) Monitoring & evaluation of the scheme

The consultant(s) will provide a full monitoring & evaluation framework to be used for the next cycle of national projects. The consultant will work closely with the Forus Secretariat to develop specific M&E tools. The emphasis will be on monitoring the results and impacts of the national projects, as well as monitoring compliance. This framework will be in line with the member-led, participatory approaches to M&E that are in line with Forus' values, while also ensuring compliance to donors. The framework will be linked to Forus' overall M&E framework for its 2021-2025 Strategy, including in terms of impact indicators.

- What are some of the good practices in the current M&E of national projects? What could be improved?
- How can Forus keep the M&E requirements simple and light for its members, while gathering high-quality data to present to donors?
- What approaches & tools could Forus use to strengthen the monitoring of project results & learning?
- How can Forus better measure the impact of the national projects on the capacities of its members?
- How can Forus generate data to capture the overall impact of the different projects?
- How can Forus better capture & disseminate the achievements of the national projects?

3. Methodological approach

The evaluation is expected to employ participatory approaches in order to place the views and assessments of Forus members at the center of the findings. The Forus Secretariat and members will be the main stakeholders of the data collection process. The recommendations are expected to draw largely on members' perceptions and ideas.

The consultant(s) will conduct a full analysis of the documentation related to national projects, including individual projects final reports. A brief assessment form answered by members at the end of their project (7 questions on the appreciation by members of the support provided by Forus) could constitute the start point of this analysis, as well as data gathered by Forus' 2020 study of its members in Africa. The documentation and working languages in the network comprise three languages: English, French and Spanish. The methodology should aim to gather detailed data from at least 25 of the 49 Forus members & 46 projects funded (of which approximately 25 are ongoing). Interviews with a minimum of 15 platforms should be planned in addition to other means of data collection. A diversity of types of projects and geographical locations should be included in the research. The study will have a cross-cutting focus on enabling and constraining factors related to the national projects. Contextual elements related to different members should be taken into account.

A key stake of the research is for consultants to produce, propose and revise a set of tools for use by the Forus Secretariat to manage and monitor the sub-granting scheme. The tools should be simple and support Forus to lighten the reporting and compliance burden on both its members and Secretariat staff, while ensuring high quality M&E for donors.

The study will apply a rigorous analytical framework to explore each of the 2 areas of questioning. The consultant(s) will propose a full methodology during the inception phase.

The consultant(s) will be expected to participate in regular online discussions with Forus to share progress on feedback, including at least two meetings with the whole Forus Secretariat: at inception phase and closing.

4. Deliverables

The list of deliverables below is suggested and could be adapted based on agreement between the consultants and Forus.

- A full methodology will be delivered in the inception phase, including the list of Forus members to be interviewed, and tools that will be revised & proposed by the consultants team.
- Findings report in English addressing the key questions, and with actionable recommendations for Forus. These recommendations will have the assessments of Forus members at the center of the findings. The findings report is expected to be at least 15 pages long + Annexes.
- A revision and concrete recommendations of Forus' key tools and processes used for the sub-granting scheme, particularly the call for proposals, project proposal form, the narrative & financial report template, and the project learning form. This set of tools will be revised by the consultants, who will propose adaptations and/or new tools.

- Proposed monitoring & evaluation framework for a new cycle of national projects, detailing indicators, processes, and at least one monitoring tool that could be used by the Forus Secretariat to monitor the projects.

5. Profile and qualifications of the consultant

Forus is searching for a multi-lingual consultant, or team of 2 consultants, with a rigorous approach and strong analytical skills. The consultant(s) will be expected to be aware of his/her own biases and how these might interact with the process, interactions and findings.

- Preferably a postgraduate degree (PhD or MSc) in the field of research, development studies
- Experience working on networks, partnerships and funding schemes
- Strong expertise in Monitoring & Evaluation, with an ability to deliver practical and simple tools
- Strong research skills & expertise on participatory approaches
- High levels of cultural awareness, sensitivity and capacity for intercultural communication
- Excellent levels of written and spoken English & French, or English & Spanish. Knowledge of all three languages will be an asset.

6. Application procedure

The application documents must be submitted in English no later than 13th September 2020 in electronic format to the following address: recruitment@forus-international.org specifying “Evaluation of national projects scheme” in the subject line. Interviews will be held on 15th and 16th September.

The application file in English should include:

- A detailed and complete Curriculum Vitae for each consultant, including links to similar studies and previous work carried out, and at least 2 references for each consultant
- A proposal for how the work will be carried out, including a detailed methodology highlighting the approach and constraints, the timeframe and calendar for the research
- A detailed budget including fees (VAT and tax included), activity and travel costs; the consultants shall specify their VAT status.

Applicants should clearly highlight any current or previous working or personal links to Forus members, as well as any risk around conflict of interest.

8. Provisional calendar

Interviews & Contracting of consultant(s)	Mid-September 2020
Inception phase	October 2020
Research phase	November 2020 – January 2021
Deliverables finalised	February 2021