

SCOPE OF WORK (SoW)

SPARK ENDLINE EVALUATION - 2026

MERCY CORPS SUDAN

Program to be Evaluated	Strengthening Markets, Productive Alliances and Financial Services (SPARK)		
Donor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Netherlands		
Project start and end date	September 15 th 2024 through December 31 st , 2025.		
Project start and end date (NCE)	January 1 st , 2026, through March 31 st , 2026.		
Location	Gaderef and Kassala States		
Partners		
Evaluation Timeframe	April 12 through 19 th June 2026		
Contact	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Ashpo Abdalduim Ali SPARK Project Manager ashpali@mercycorps.org </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Shadrack Steven PaQ Director ssteven@mercycorps.org </td> </tr> </table>	Ashpo Abdalduim Ali SPARK Project Manager ashpali@mercycorps.org	Shadrack Steven PaQ Director ssteven@mercycorps.org
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OVERVIEW OF SPARK PROGRAM

The SPARK program aims to improve food security, income, and employment opportunities for rural populations in Sudan through a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach.

The SPARK program applied a pragmatic, market-oriented approach aimed at strengthening key agricultural value chains and supporting early recovery in a fragile context. Drawing on market systems thinking, the program addressed selected constraints related to market linkages, access to finance, and service provision, while also providing targeted direct support to MSMEs, smallholder farmers, and local market infrastructure such as processing hubs. Interventions focused on improving practices, capacities, and relationships among supported actors, with the objective of enhancing functionality, resilience, and continuity of market activities rather than achieving system-wide transformation.

The program supports smallholder farmers and MSMEs by strengthening market linkages, expanding access to financial services, and improving productive infrastructure, including solar powered agro-processing systems. The program directly targets 20,000 participants and

indirectly reaches 50,000 individuals through improved market systems, financial inclusion, and infrastructure.

Key intervention areas:

- Productive alliances (value chain linkages)
- Market infrastructure & solar-powered agro-processing
- Access to finance for MSMEs

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

Assess program results, evaluate performance and examine market systems change, and generate actionable recommendations. The main purpose of this assignment is to evaluate program achievements towards meeting the objectives and targets and to assess relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability of the program at program end. The final evaluation is expected to identify if there are plausible links between program inputs and outcomes and results and draw lessons for improvement of future similar programs. More specifically, the evaluation would determine the extent to which program outcomes, and their targets were achieved. The evaluator will be expected to analyze quantitative and qualitative data and report on the outcomes and results of the program. Outcome refers to the effect of the more immediate tangible benefits.

The findings from this study will enable Mercy Corps and other partners to document our achievements, challenges and key learnings derived from the program implementation process and will also enable us to capture and share all relevant information to be disseminated to our donors, the government and other development partners working in the same area.

In line with the program's market-oriented approach, the evaluation will examine how SPARK-supported interventions, including both market-based engagement and targeted direct support, relate to observed changes in market practices, capacities, and interactions among key actors such as MSMEs, service providers, and financial institutions. Findings will be interpreted alongside relevant contextual and external factors influencing outcomes during the program period.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The endline survey will be conducted using a mixed method employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies involving administration of a simple questionnaire to eligible respondents within the communities of intervention. Data will be collected from purposely selected participants to better understand the contextual norms and practices surrounding participants' improved status and practices and to gather information about the communities of intervention.

In addition to the mixed quantitative and qualitative methods described above, the evaluation will also apply a light market-oriented lens where relevant, focusing on practical changes in market practices, capacities, and relationships observed during program implementation. This lens will be used to support interpretation of findings alongside results from direct program activities.

The evaluation firm/individual is expected to provide a means of answering the evaluation questions using both qualitative and quantitative means of data-collection, providing a representative sampling strategy. This will include the key deliverables of developing an inception report detailing the process and methodologies to be employed to answer the evaluation questions; undertaking desk review of the

relevant program documents and secondary analysis to further inform the results interpretation; and designing evaluation methodology following the below standards:

Design Qualitative and Quantitative Data Framework and Tools - The external evaluator (consultant) is expected to conduct a mixed methods evaluation using tools and a work plan approved by the MC team prior to the start of the evaluation. Data collection shall involve visits to program locations, meetings with program partners, targeted participants, and other key stakeholders. Travel to program locations is subject to security clearance and adherence to Mercy Corps safety and security protocols. The consultant will lead the qualitative and quantitative data collection, including supervising data collection teams, and completing the analysis within the approved timeline adopting the most appropriate sample size for the assignment.

Qualitative approach - The qualitative evaluation must capture lessons learned and best practices through a variety of qualitative methods. The consulting firm/consultant will design the overall qualitative study approach and should consider a variety of primary data collection methods, including semi-structured in-depth interviews; focus group discussions; behavior change case studies; and observations. The evaluation team will be responsible for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Data will be collected from key stakeholders through interviews, discussions, consultative processes, and observations. Participants for the qualitative interviews will be selected using purposive samples.

Quantitative methodological approach - The quantitative analysis developed to evaluate the results of the program will allow for comparing the indicators obtained in the baseline carried out at the beginning of the program, and the changes over time in the program. The sample frame, the questionnaire, and the fieldwork will be guided and led by the external consultant, in coordination with Mercy Corps. The endline will include primary data collection and analysis of quantitative survey data. The endline survey tool will be designed by the consultant and must utilize the same data collection instruments, level of statistical precision, and statistical power as much as possible. The consultant will be responsible for hiring enumerators and testing of tools, in addition to being responsible for designing the tools, training the enumerators and providing quality assurance checks. Quantitative designs will allow the program to examine statistically significant changes in estimates from baseline to endline key outcome indicators with the sampling frame and sample size being over-all sampling strategy.

Evaluation Questions: As a recommendation, the following evaluation themes can be considered with potential edits and changes considered by the external evaluator:

1. Impact on income, food security, employment
2. Market systems change and sustainability.

This theme will focus on practical changes in market practices, relationships, and service provision linked to SPARK interventions, including uptake and continuation by supported actors and early signals of sustainability, rather than just an assessment of system-wide transformation.

3. Effectiveness of interventions
4. Gender and inclusion outcomes
5. Sustainability of benefits

Sustainability will be assessed in terms of the likelihood that supported market actors and service arrangements will continue to function beyond the program period, based on commercial viability, capacity, and local ownership.

It is expected that the above theme will be adjusted in consultation with the consultant. The proposed evaluation dimensions for the endline have been summarized in the table below:

Dimensions of the Evaluation	Cross Cutting Themes of the Evaluation
Relevance	Resilience
Effectiveness and Efficiency	Adaptive Management
Gender and Inclusion	Sustainability

It is expected that the external consultant will carry comprehensive desk review of the program documents in addition to reviewing relevant documents (proposal, evaluation reports, progress narrative and monitoring reports etc.). One report will be produced after the desk review - an inception report detailing the process and methodologies to be employed to answer the evaluation questions aligned to the proposed evaluation dimensions.

The proposed evaluation will draw on the program's logical framework outlined below.

SPARK Programme: Logical Framework

Result Level	Description	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
GOAL	Impact: To improve prosperity, employment and food security of rural communities in the target states	% of people (male & female) reporting that their communities are more food secure and improved economic opportunities	Baseline and Endline surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further deterioration in the economic situation – especially as a result of inflation and price fluctuations • Imposition of movement restrictions and lockdown measures as a result of the conflict • Security remains stable especially in Gedaref and Kassala • Good level of engagement is retained by the stakeholders • Restrictions are not placed on the media and public discourse • IDP host governments have a genuine interest in
OUTCOMES	<p>Objective 1: Create or improve alliances between MSME agribusiness and other key actors within value chains</p> <p>Objective 2: Improved primary processing and irrigation capacity in key value chains</p> <p>Objective 3: Increase access to and use of financing by MSME agribusinesses</p>	<p># of MSMEs gaining new or improved access to the value chain</p> <p># of MSMEs gaining new or improved access to markets</p> <p># of MSMEs that obtain financial services</p>	Baseline and Endline surveys	
OUTPUTS	<p>Output 1.1: Strengthen upstream value chain linkages between MSMEs and smallholder farmers / producer associations</p> <p>Output 1.2: Strengthen downstream value chain linkages between MSMEs and larger buyers / retailers and processors</p>	<p># of MSMEs that utilize the business development services</p> <p>Average compound annual growth rate of supported MSMEs</p>	Baseline and Endline surveys	

	<p>Output 2.1: Accelerated uptake and improved market penetration of solar agro-processing and drip irrigation</p> <p>Output 3.1: Build demand side capacity of MSME agri-businesses to receive and manage financing</p> <p>Output 3.2: Build supply-side capacity of FSP to provide appropriate, sustainable & scalable financing to MSME agri-businesses</p>	<p>Amount of mobilized private finance</p> <p># of direct jobs supported</p> <p># of end users with access to new or improved infrastructures</p> <p># of improved or introduced new financial products</p>		<p>addressing their internal displacement situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy Corps and partners have access to/ ability to deliver programme activities to beneficiaries in the selected states
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Activity 1.1.1. Business Development Services (BDS) for MSME agribusinesses</p> <p>Activity 1.1.2. Creation and/or strengthening of farm output market aggregation networks</p> <p>Activity 1.2.1. Technical & advisory support for MSME agro-processors</p> <p>Activity 1.2.2. Business to Business (B2B) networking opportunities</p> <p>Activity 2.1.1. Pilot solar-powered irrigation plots operated by farmer-led enterprises / MSMEs</p> <p>Activity 2.1.2. Promote solar-powered irrigation hubs operated by farmer-led enterprises / MSMEs</p> <p>Activity 2.1.3. SPARK hub mentoring & engagement activities</p> <p>Activity 3.1.1. Provision of financial education to MSME agri-businesses to address demand-side challenges</p> <p>Activity 3.1.2. Information and awareness-raising campaign targeting MSME agri-businesses</p> <p>Activity 3.2.1. FSPs develop new products, services and capacities to address supply-side challenges</p> <p>Activity 3.2.2. Agri-business Recovery Fund (ARF)</p>			

TEAM COMPOSITION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The MC Program and MEL can support in facilitating approvals from HAC on tools and travel permits. The SPARK Project Manager and the PaQ Director will be responsible for approving any document shared by the consultant.

The Consultant will be responsible for developing the inception report, developing qualitative and quantitative tools, engaging and training enumerators, providing quality assurance, leading the analysis, reporting and any internal presentations among others.

KEY DELIVERABLES

The consultant is expected to provide a means of answering the evaluation questions using both qualitative and quantitative. The consultant will also specify in their proposal, means of data-collection, data analysis and provide the sampling strategy. Key deliverables will include:

1. An inception report detailing agreed upon process and methodologies to be employed to answer the evaluation questions.
2. Data collection tools - design qualitative and quantitative data framework and tools: The external consultant is expected to conduct a mixed methods evaluation using tools and a work plan that she/he/they have developed and have been approved by the SPARK Project Manager or PaQ Director prior to the start of the evaluation. Data collection shall involve trained enumerators visiting project locations, meetings with program partners, targeted participants, and other key stakeholders. The consultant will lead the qualitative and quantitative data collection, including supervising data collection teams, and completing the analysis within the approved timeline.

3. Draft and final endline evaluation reports

The consultant is expected to carry out the following tasks and produce a comprehensive evaluation report.

- Engage, train, and oversee the work of enumerators.
- Prepare the draft endline evaluation report.
- Conduct in-country presentation of findings to Mercy Corps
- Prepare final evaluation report and presentation.
- A single brief of 4-5 pages summarizing key findings.

The consultant will participate in an inception meeting with the Mercy Corps, and key stakeholders, to be held within the first week of the consultancy. The primary purpose of the inception meeting is to reach a consensus on the scope of work and expected outputs of the required services which should give guidance to the inception report, inclusive of the work plan. Additionally, the consultant is required to participate in a technical meeting (by video/teleconferencing) as necessary to present and discuss the results of the draft evaluation report to MC. Any matters arising from this meeting should be addressed as necessary and results incorporated in the final evaluation report. The timing of the meeting will be determined.

Below is an overview of the activities, their duration, and the stakeholders responsible. The duration/Level of Effort included is an estimate.

Duration	Activity	Stakeholder
Week 1 <i>3 Working days</i>	Review evaluation SoW with the external evaluator to clarify timeframe and available budget	External evaluator, SPARK Project Manager, PaQ Director etc
	Undertake desk review of the relevant program documents that include the program proposals, progress narrative and monitoring reports etc. Develop an inception report detailing the process and methodologies to be employed to answer the evaluation questions. This should include all evaluation tools, and important time schedules for this exercise, and be presented to Mercy Corps for review and further input before going to the field.	External evaluator
	Review and provide feedback to inception report and tools for external evaluator to incorporate	SPARK Project Manager, PaQ Director
	With input from Mercy Corps program team and MEL teams, develop data collection tools and translate them as appropriate	External evaluator
	With support of Mercy Corps (if needed), get all relevant Technical Agreements ahead of data collection	
Week 2-4 <i>10-12 working days</i>	Engage and train enumerators	External evaluator
	Pre-test data collection instruments	External evaluator
	Finalize data collection instruments	External evaluator
	Oversee data collection	External evaluator
Week 5 - 7 <i>15 working days</i>	Encode and Analyze data	External evaluator
	Prepare draft evaluation report	External evaluator

	Provide detailed feedback to draft report	SPARK Project Manager, PaQ Director, and team
	Draft report, produce presentation of findings, and share back with MC (Not more 40 pages – all other additions can be included as Annexes)	External evaluator
Week 8 3 working days	Finalized report based on feedback from the review team	External evaluator

Mercy Corps' SPARK Project Manager, PaQ Director, and team will be available to work directly with the consultant throughout the duration of the assignment and to answer any question as they emerge.

REPORT STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

- **Cover Page, List of Acronyms**
- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary:** This section should be a clear and concise stand-alone document that gives readers the essential contents of the evaluation report, including a summary of major findings, and recommendations.
- **Methodology:** This section should be sufficiently detailed to help the reader judge the accuracy of the report and its findings.
- **Limitations:** This section should address constraints and limitations of the methodology, and the implications of these limitations for the findings, including whether and why any of the evaluation findings are inconclusive.
- **Results:** This section should provide a clear assessment of progress with respect to indicators, evaluation questions, production of indicator estimates with tables showing the baseline indicator values.
- **Synthesis, Recommendations:** This is space for the evaluation team to think about the data and results and make concrete recommendations for current or future program improvements, and generally comment on data and results.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Disclose any conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest, including the interest of program staff in having a successful program.
- **Annexes:** These should include a complete file of data collection instruments in English, list of stakeholder groups with number and type of interactions; SOW, qualitative protocols developed and used, all data sets (these can be provided in electronic format), any required photos, participant profiles or other special documentation needed.

The key timelines to the report will be agreed once the consultant is on board, however final report is expected on or before 19th June 2026. All reports are to be submitted in electronic format (MS Word and PDF).

The Consultant will report to:

Mercy Corps Senior MEL Manager and SPARK Project Manager and in their absence MC PaQ Director

The Consultant will work closely with:

Mercy Corps' SPARK team

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

The consultant(s) should possess a blend of research expertise and Market Systems Development (MSD) knowledge as indicated below:

- Strong experience in evaluating MSD programs, particularly those related to market systems.
- A strong approach to assuring quality assurance of data collected.
- A strong ethical approach to data collection – while still being able to meet the objectives of the consultancy.
- Knowledge of strategic and operational management of program operations and proven ability to provide strategic recommendations to key stakeholders.
- Strong analytical skills and ability to clearly synthesize and present findings, draw practical conclusions, make recommendations and prepare well-written reports in a timely manner.
- Demonstrated experience in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques, especially in emergency operations.
- Data visualization skills are highly desirable.
- Experience, knowledge, and clear understanding of the Sudan context.
- Operational presence in Sudan
- Ability to engage and train enumerators in Kassala and Gaderef and also facilitate HAC and other government approvals
- Good interpersonal skills and understanding of cultural sensitivities.

ASSESSMENT AND AWARD OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Mercy Corps will evaluate technical and financial proposals including CVs and award the assignment based on experience, 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.