



Terms of Reference – Final Evaluation of Forus' EU-funded project

27th January 2021

[Forus](#) is an innovative global network empowering civil society for effective social change. It brings together 69 National NGO Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Pacific.

Forus is seeking an external evaluator or team of evaluators to lead the final evaluation of its 2015-2021 project “A stronger International Forum of National NGO Platforms for greater impact on public policies”. The final evaluation findings will contribute to Forus’ learning and final project reporting. The evaluation is expected to generate strong evidence around the impact of Forus activities for these purposes. The recommendations of the study will enable Forus, its national and regional members to strengthen their approaches in the context of the launch of a [Strategy for 2021-2025, A Positive Agenda for Civil Society](#).

1. Background on the project to be evaluated

The aim of the project “*A stronger International Forum of National NGO Platforms for greater impact on public policies*” is for development NGOs to influence public policies directly at the national, regional and global levels, as full development actors in their own right, contributing directly to human rights and poverty eradication, and to achieve sustainable, equitable and inclusive development. Forus (formerly known as IFP) and its members pursue this aim as a legitimate and representative catalyst of NGOs’ voice across the globe. Forus’ role is three-fold: to CONNECT civil society, to SUPPORT its capacities and to INFLUENCE public policies.

The project is supported by the European Commission (EuropeAid) and is co-funded by the French Development Agency (AFD). It is being implemented at the global level with more than 50 co-applicants (Forus national and/or regional members) since September 2016. The project duration is approx. 4.5 years; the project end date is June 2021. Forus is developing the project in the context of a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission.

The project has three interlinked specific objectives:

- 1) To strengthen Forus institutional, organizational and operational capacities;
- 2) To strengthen the capacity to achieve their objectives, exchange and learning of national and regional members and Forus;

3) To increase the impact and realize the full potential of Forus to advocate at national, regional and global levels, particularly on Agenda 2030 (specifically SDGs 16 and 17), financing for development and an enabling environment for civil society.

Key project activities include:

1) Strengthening of institutional, organizational and operational capacities: creation of a legal structure, staff recruitment, updated communication strategy, fundraising, regular meetings of the governing and consulting bodies, outreach & enlargement processes...

2) Capacity development, exchange and learning of national and regional platforms and Forus: members' needs assessment, peer-exchange and learning activities, subgranting scheme & support to national and regional capacity development projects, dissemination and creation of toolkits, leadership development program...

3) Advocacy at national, regional and global levels: thematic advocacy working groups (e.g. Agenda 2030 working group, SDG 16 working group, Financing for Development working group), policy/position papers, participation in/contribution to international events such as the UN High Level Political Forum, peer learning and experience sharing on the advocacy activities among members, collaboration with other civil society networks.

2. Previous project evaluations

In the framework of the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) exercise implemented by the European Commission, this project has already been evaluated by an external consortium contracted by the European Commission. This ROM evaluation was conducted from October 2018 to December 2018 and focused on global and regional activities implemented directly by Forus or by its regional members in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Latin America. In 2019, an external team of evaluators conducted a mid-term review of the project using the DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). The mid-term review produced data and evidence in relation to the results of the project, enabling strong reporting. The logical framework was redesigned to ensure stronger coherence with the project aims and the M&E systems of Forus.

The lessons learnt and findings from the ROM exercise and the mid-term review shall orient the focus of the final evaluation, particularly the evaluation questions in relation to the project's logical framework. The reports from both exercises will be made available to the evaluators, as well as reports from additional studies carried out such as Forus' study of its African civil society networks and its Scoping study of national platforms' roles in promoting civic space.

Compared to the previous evaluation exercises, this evaluation will have a stronger emphasis on advocacy, policy, campaigning and communication activities, focusing on the external impact of the network under the "INFLUENCE" pillar of Forus' work. The evaluator will also support Forus to develop its overall framework for the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning for its 2021-2025 Strategy, working collaboratively with the Forus team.

3. Purpose and scope of the final evaluation

The overall purpose of the final evaluation is to:

- gather evidence of change by evaluating both qualitative and quantitative data against a selected set of the project's indicators; capturing achievements of the programme's results and indicators; going beyond the recommendations of the ROM review conducted in 2018 and the mid-term evaluation conducted in 2019
- draw lessons and concrete recommendations for enhancing the quality of Forus activities, contributing to the project's learning
- showcase examples of change and lessons learnt particularly in the areas of advocacy and communications, thus informing Forus' strategy
- contribute to ensuring accountability to various stakeholders involved in the project; and support to the development of Forus' overall approach to MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning) for its 2021-2025 Strategy

The scope of the evaluation is the full implementation of the 57-month EC-funded project "*A stronger International Forum of National NGO Platforms for greater impact on public policies*", with a particular focus on the second stage of implementation.

Key evaluation questions:

1. How has Forus' positions influenced government policies, implementation plans and their monitoring? How has Forus been able to leverage its network nature in its influencing work?
2. How have Forus' members positions influenced government policies, implementation plans and their monitoring? What is Forus' specific contribution to members achieving influence and impact?
3. To what extent does membership of Forus provide national platforms with leverage in dialogue with national and international policy-makers?
4. To what extent do non-CSO stakeholders know Forus and consider it a legitimate and influential actor? How do CSO stakeholders' view Forus' contribution to shared campaigns and policy advocacy work?
5. To what extent do decision-makers consider Forus to be an influential actor in the implementation of Agenda 2030?
6. How effective is the external communication of Forus according to external stakeholders?
7. How have Forus positions on funding of CSOs influenced donors' funding schemes?
8. How have Forus and its members' activities to promote an enabling environment for civil society influenced donor schemes and government policies and implementation?
9. How can Forus improve its approach to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning for the 2021-2025 Strategic phase?

Cross-cutting questions:

- To what extent is transparency, accountability and good governance ensured in the project?

- To what extent was gender mainstreaming included in the project? If so, how and to what effect?
- To what extent was environmental mainstreaming included in the project? If so, how and to what effect?
- Does the project actively contribute to the promotion of Human Rights? If so, how? If not, why not?

The audience of the evaluation will be:

- Forus' decentralized secretariat team and governance: for mapping out reflections and lessons learned from the project activities and to use the recommendations for implementation of the 2021-2025 Strategy.
- Donors (European Commission/EuropeAid and French Development Agency): for assessing the effective and efficient use of the funding to achieve stated goals and results of the project.
- Members and partner organizations (in particular, institutions and CSOs that collaborate with Forus on advocacy and campaigning) that may be interested in the results and lessons learned from this evaluation

4. Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation shall mainly be conducted remotely through interviews, group discussions and a desk study. The evaluation will develop and apply a rigorous analytical framework to identify the impact of Forus, particularly in terms of advocacy, policy, campaigning and communication activities. Evaluators are expected to detail this framework in the technical offer.

The evaluation will assess the impact of the advocacy, policy, campaigning and communication activities led by the Forus Secretariat, and that of its members. The evaluation will draw out how Forus contributes to the impact of its members' advocacy work, and factors affecting the engagement with Forus for this type of work. A critical analysis of the impact of factors external to the platforms and coalitions, including donor-driven processes, and effects related to partners including Forus should be included. Consultants will be expected to collect data from a cross-section of representatives of Forus members and external partners, including a diversity of respondents and different levels of seniority. Interviews of a minimum of 18 external partners, including representative of donor agencies, national governments, international institutions such as the UN and EU, and CSOs are to be conducted. Case studies of a minimum of 5 Forus members will be included. The list of interviewees and subjects for the case studies will be determined with Forus at the inception phase. The evaluation methodology and data collection tools will need approval from Forus management.

Principles underpinning the evaluator's approach are:

- Participatory and culturally sensitive process valuing knowledge and approaches from within the context;
- Impartiality and independence of the evaluation process from the programming and implementation functions;

- Credibility of the evaluation, through use of appropriately skilled and independent expert;
- Transparency of the evaluation process, including wide dissemination of results;
- Usefulness of the evaluation findings and recommendations, through timely presentation of relevant, productively critical, clear and concise information, and commitment to building capacity. The evaluator may refer to the Critical Friend methodology.

The evaluation will have a cross-cutting consideration for inclusion, ensuring that factors related to gender, culture, language and other areas are taken into account.

The evaluation will consist of several phases:

- Contracting: Contract is signed, and a discussion of the assignment takes place. First documents are provided to the evaluator.
- Inception phase: A kick-off meeting and an inception meeting will be held. Submission of inception report (which describes a proposal for the design of the evaluation and elaborates on how data will be obtained and analysed). The use of a data collection planning worksheet or a similar tool is required. Data triangulation and quality control are very important and need to be discussed in the inception report. Evaluation questions and evaluation matrix shall be discussed and validated at that stage.
- Evaluation phase: The evaluator studies all necessary project documents; re-constructs and analyses the intervention logic and its assumptions. Existing data needs to be analysed and interpreted. It is expected that data and information will be obtained through different methods such as: analysis of documents, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews face-to face (with a limited number of persons) or by phone, group discussions, online-survey (if applicable), others. (no field trips to visit the partners and members are foreseen as necessary)
- Final draft report: Submission and presentation of final draft report to management and governance bodies. Inclusion of comments from partners and Forus. Support the staff in the developing the MEAL framework for the Strategy 2021-2025, through a workshop.
- Final delivery: Submission of final deliverables. Presentation of final evaluation findings to the European Commission together with Forus staff.

The evaluators will work closely with Forus Secretariat, ensuring regular communications and meetings throughout the evaluation phase. Support for the logistical aspects of the evaluation can be provided by the Forus Secretariat.

5. Deliverables

- Inception report, including a detailed methodology, list of interviewees and tools for the evaluation
- Draft and final evaluation report in English addressing the evaluation questions and including
 - executive summary of key findings and recommendations;

- o evaluation findings, analysis and conclusions with associated evidence and data clearly illustrated. Use of tables, graphs, quotes, anecdotes and stories to illustrate findings and conclusions is encouraged;
- o case studies; which should illustrate stories of the impact of Forus/its members on specific policies, processes and their implementation;
- o recommendations for the next actions, which should be practical and linked directly to conclusions;
- o appendices, including methodology and evaluation tools, list of interviewees, questionnaire, and brief biography of evaluator.
- Draft of a MEAL framework for Forus' 2021-2025 Strategy developed collaboratively with Forus, including through a team workshop facilitated by the evaluator
- Two presentations of final findings: to Forus team and governance, and to Forus' main funder the European Commission

Final payment is dependent on the submission and approval of the final evaluation report.

6. Profile and qualifications of the consultant

Applicants may be individuals or a team of consultants. As a diverse network, Forus encourages mixed teams, with different backgrounds and genders.

Key qualifications should be:

- Relevant academic degree (master level).
- A minimum of ten years' experience and expertise in the non-profit sector, preferably networks in the field of development and linked to networks.
- At least three evaluations in the last five years, ideally impact evaluations, and focusing on advocacy, policy, campaigning and communication work implemented by NGOs.
- Demonstrated experience of evaluation involving qualitative data and 'soft' outcomes.
- Demonstrated experience of evaluating multi-country projects that are funded by the European Commission.
- Working experience in several countries and continents.
- An understanding of the nature of capacity development work and advocacy activities.
- Experience in project cycle management.
- Excellent oral and written English skills.
- Capacity to study documentation and conduct interviews in French and Spanish. Portuguese is an advantage.

7. Application procedure

The application documents must be submitted no later than 17th February 2021 in electronic format to the following address: recruitment@forus-international.org specifying "Final Evaluation" in the subject line.

The application file should include:

- A technical offer including:
 - Evaluation methodology: Describe your overall approach and evaluation methodology including, but not limited to, evaluation questions, evaluation design, proposed tools and methodology.
 - Understanding of the issues at stake and the Terms of Reference.
 - Relevant experience: Provide details of projects of similar scope, complexity and nature you have worked on previously.
 - Specific expertise: advocacy& campaigning, Agenda 2030, civic space, international networks.
 - Key personnel and staffing: Describe the key personnel. Include CVs (no more than 2 pages each and attached as annex) of key personnel who will be part of the proposed plan.
 - Timeline: Include a detailed timeline of key activities.
 - Three references (including telephone numbers) and web links to previous work (if available) or Annexes.
- A detailed financial offer including:
 - a line-item budget: The cost estimates used to prepare the budget should be presented in Euro (including VAT and any other taxes). The tenderer should include his/her proposed daily rate, including all costs.
 - a budget narrative.

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

The interviews will take place during the week of 22nd February 2021. A multilingual selection panel composed of Forus staff will conduct the interviews.

10. Provisional calendar

A total of 25-35 working days is currently estimated for this assignment.

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| Contracting of evaluators | End February 2021 |
| Inception phase, including kick-off meeting and inception meeting | March 2021 |
| Evaluation phase | April – May 2021 |
| Final delivery | Mid-June 2021 |