

**Terms of Reference (ToR):**  
**External Evaluation of Project 300-900-1471 ZG:**  
**Asian People's Exchange on Food Sovereignty and Agroecology (APEX)**

## **1. Introduction**

The **Asian People's Exchange on Food Sovereignty and Agroecology (APEX)** is a regional platform coordinated by PAN Asia Pacific (PANAP) in consortium with MASIPAG, and MISEREOR, with Elizabeth Cruzada (as People-Led Development (PLD) guide), supporting grassroots organisations in advancing food sovereignty and people-led agroecology in Asia. The external evaluation is scheduled for the early part of the third year of APEX Phase 2. In summative terms it will assess the platform's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and impact. Importantly, as a formative exercise it will support strategic learning and improvements for future planning of effective international, multilevel exchange.

## **2. History and rationale of APEX**

In recent decades, the growing power of transnational corporations over land, seeds, and markets has deepened landlessness, biodiversity loss, and economic marginalization among smallholder farmers in Asia. These entrenched inequalities worsened with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the fragility of import-dependent food systems, intensified hunger, and disrupted rural livelihoods already under pressure from climate change, environmental degradation, and aggressive agribusiness expansion. Across the region, poor rural and urban communities, especially women, Indigenous peoples, and youth confronted rising vulnerability while receiving inadequate support for sustainable and community-led food production practices.

Against this backdrop, farmers' movements, grassroots organizations, and civil society networks continued to assert food sovereignty and promote agroecology as alternatives to corporate-controlled, chemical-intensive agriculture. The forerunner process Regional Learning and Exchange Platform for facilitating change processes towards Food Sovereignty in Asia (RLEP, 2016–2020), strengthened capacities for people-led development (PLD) through participatory learning, community exchanges, and facilitation skills training – a process that run in both South Asia and Southeast Asia. By the end of RLEP, participants identified the need for deeper guidance in applying PLD, expanding agroecology practice, continuous exchanges, and strengthening advocacy within their communities and beyond. These directly informed the move towards APEX in 2020, under the consortium of PAN Asia Pacific (PANAP), MASIPAG and MISEREOR.

APEX Phase 1 (2020–2023) functioned as a platform for shared analysis, solidarity, and knowledge exchange during COVID-19 with the goal of contributing towards strengthening the capacity of peoples' movements in achieving food sovereignty, implementing sustainable agricultural production systems adapted to climate change, and creating a liveable future for the rural population of Asia, in particular for young people. The specific objectives were:

- Awareness on food sovereignty and its related issues, including pesticides, GMOs, the climate crisis, corporate control on agriculture, land grabbing and others is increased;
- People-led development processes towards achieving food sovereignty have been expanded to new groups and regions; and

- The capacities of participating groups (organizations) in initiating and accompanying agroecology processes to create a liveable future for rural communities, in particular for women and young people, are enhanced.

Through coordinated work across its PLD, agroecology, and advocacy tracks (online conferences, participatory action research workshops, thematic sessions on food systems, seeds, biodiversity, pesticides, and climate change), APEX helped partners to document local experiences, deepen political understanding, and strengthen community-led agroecology initiatives. As restrictions eased, regional meetings and hands-on agroecology trainings enabled partners to further integrate PLD into organizational practice, develop communications and advocacy strategies, and engage more directly in national and global policy spaces, including climate justice advocacy.

Building on these, the current project (300-900-1471 ZG), APEX Phase 2 (2023–2026) aimed to deepen PLD processes, expand agroecology practices, and strengthen national, regional, and global advocacy for food sovereignty and climate justice. The goal was to help strengthen food sovereignty movements in Asia and contribute to genuinely sustainable food systems transformation and climate justice assertion through people-led development, agroecology, and advocacy. The objectives set were:

- Principles and practice of people-led development for food sovereignty are further articulated and advanced among an increased number of participating organisations and their communities and stakeholders, including women and youth;
- The capacities of rural communities and organisations, including women and youth, in dealing with the impacts of corporate food systems and climate change are enhanced through learning exchanges on people-led agroecology as part of movement-building for food sovereignty; and
- The capacity of rural communities, including women and youth to carry out policy advocacy, both at the national/local and global/regional levels, to promote food systems transformation and climate justice is reinforced.

### 3. Objectives of the Evaluation

Situated within a rapidly changing global context and rooted in the lived struggles and innovations of Asian rural communities, APEX represents a critical regional effort to advance people-led approaches to food sovereignty and agroecology at a time of profound systemic crisis. The evaluation shall assess the platform's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and impact. Formatively, it shall strengthen strategic learning across the consortium and inform future directions. APEX is a structure for multilevel cooperation. It involves transmission between exchange and learning on an international level and the level where organizations work with communities. These organizations should benefit from the international exchange as well as guide this exchange with their priorities. *The evaluation shall focus on APEX as an international structure*, for various reasons. Given the many member countries and the costs involved, it will not be possible to visit the community level, at least not in a representative fashion. Moreover, the direct target group of APEX are organizations and primary relevance and effectiveness of APEX lies in enabling these. Finally, there is some formative emphasis of the evaluation on how to organize international exchange on agroecology and PLD in the future. This concerns the needs, priorities and views of participating organizations (and coordinators) more than those of the communities; community members who are not themselves involved in APEX will not be able to evaluate the structure and performance of APEX. Effects on community level can and should be covered in the perspective of APEX partners' on how their community-level work has benefitted from exchange via APEX.

The evaluation thus aims to:

- Provide an independent assessment of APEX phase 1 and 2 implementation, achievements, and challenges.
- Generate lessons for the platform's future.
- Inform the planning, if possible, for a next phase or any scaling or adaptation.
- Assess how well APEX has succeeded in strengthening the capacities of its partners and their work with communities, and, for the success observed, why; in particular, what are key success factors for multi-level network cooperation in APEX.
- Examine how APEX contributes directly and via its members to movement building, policy advocacy, and food system transformation across Asia. What have been effects and relevance of APEX for food systems stakeholders in the countries?

#### **4. Evaluation Questions**

The evaluation will be guided by the OECD-DAC criteria:

##### **Relevance**

- To what extent and by which means do APEX objectives and strategies align with the needs of its target groups? (primary target group: partner organizations working with rural communities; related to that: rural communities, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples)
- Have strategies and interaction responded to concrete requests, policies and priorities of members, partners, beneficiaries? How were these needs identified?
- Have strategies adapted/changed in response to changing circumstances?
- How well and how concretely do the PLD, agroecology, and advocacy components address current food, climate, and political challenges? How well do the approaches help partners deal with current problems?

##### **Coherence**

- How well is APEX integrated with or complementary to other regional efforts on food sovereignty and agroecology?
- How do APEX activities align with national movements and partner organisations as well as international campaigns?

##### **Effectiveness**

- To what extent has APEX achieved its objectives and expected outcomes, including any differential results across groups (such as different member countries, different working groups, different types of member organization)? Which effects did APEX have on the capacities of participating organizations to strengthen agroecology in their respective countries?
- Did learnings from the APEX reach out to the networks on national levels?
- And to what extent did members share their newly gained knowledge, experiences, impressions etc. with CSO, communities etc. in their countries of origin?
- Has APEX been used as a room for exchange particularly also for occurring challenges appearing in the national/local contexts?
- What has been the participation and leadership role of women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples?
- Which concrete gains have APEX members brought to local communities because of their APEX involvement? What are concrete examples?

- Which success factors and which surrounding conditions (including limitations) were decisive for the extent to which the objectives were achieved?
- Which approaches and tools have proven most effective?
- Which unintended effects (good or bad) can be observed? How were these addressed or managed in the project?
- To what extent have lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust intervention implementation?
- Is the current format of exchange the most promising and effective for addressing the needs and requirements of communities and partners?

### **Efficiency**

- How economically and timely were resources used to achieve results? To what extent have planned activities been implemented and why?
- Are coordination and management processes efficient (e.g. Secretariat, Working Groups, consortium)? The whole management process should be covered, including financial administration.
- How well are local and regional exchanges facilitated?
- How have commitment and contributions of APEX members facilitated project implementation? Is the APEX a lively, proactive and interactive space driven by partners' and communities' engagement?

### **Impact**

- What are the observable changes in partners' capacities, community practices, and political participation and engagement? Can these be attributed to measures, outputs or outcomes of the project?
- How has APEX influenced discourse on food, climate and related issues, in particular on food sovereignty and related practice at local and regional levels?

### **Sustainability**

- To what extent are the gains of APEX likely to continue beyond the project duration and without further external logistic and funding support?
- How embedded are the concepts and practices of PLD and agroecology in community organisations?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure continuity of learning and collaboration? Based on the results of APEX so far, what are lessons as to how future collaboration and learning should be organized? Which internal and external conditions including support structures would be required?

## **4. Methodology**

The consultant/team is expected to propose a mixed-methods, participatory approach, including but not limited to:

- Review of documents: project proposal, partner reports, outputs of exchanges, campaign materials;
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): with APEX partners, Secretariat, Working Group members, consortium representatives (this would ideally happen at the upcoming conference in May 2026 where many APEX members will be

present; online KII/FGDs are possible in addition); moreover, interviews (could be online) with other beneficiaries, including CSO outside APEX;

- case study documentation/analysis (including interviews) of concrete cases where APEX exchange reflects in partners' work, e.g. in different countries and working APEX groups);
- Survey (option, if feasible and appropriate) to gauge perception and participation across the network;
- A Validation Workshop (online in case the upcoming Regional Conference is used, as suggested above, for interviews with APEX members).
- Storytelling, human interest stories, e.g. told by a partner reflecting on what has changed since APEX.

All methods must be gender-sensitive, culturally appropriate, and inclusive of diverse stakeholders. Analysis and results should be differentiated according to different target groups. Methods as specified by evaluators in the inception phase, need to take this into account.

## 5. Organisation of the Mission

- **Evaluator(s):** A qualified consultant or team with expertise in food sovereignty, agroecology, participatory methodologies, and network/movement evaluation.
- **Duration:** 30–40 working days spread over a 3-4 -month period. To be specified in discussions with evaluators based on inception report.
- **Tentative Timeline:**
  - Contracting; February/March
  - Inception: April 2026
  - Fieldwork, Data collection: May 2026
  - Draft Report: June 2026
  - Workshop & Final Report &: June/July 2026

PANAP will support logistics, schedule interviews, and facilitate connections with partners across countries.

## 6. Deliverables

- **Inception Report:** With methodology, work plan, and tools;
- **Draft Evaluation Report:** For comments from the Consortium and key partners;
- **Final Evaluation Report:** Incorporating feedback, 30–40 pages plus annexes; to include concrete recommendations based on the above questions, in particular as to how future collaboration and learning should be organized, including collaboration instruments, structure and the administrative level.
- **Presentation:** Slide deck for validation workshop;
- **Executive Summary:** 3–5 pages in plain language for partners' use.

## 7. Required Qualifications

- Demonstrated expertise in development evaluation using OECD-DAC criteria;
- Strong knowledge of agroecology, food sovereignty, and people-led development;
- Experience working in or with grassroots organisations in the Asia Pacific;
- Fluency in English; ability to coordinate with diverse stakeholders remotely and in-person;
- Familiarity with regional networks and advocacy platforms is an advantage.

## 8. Budget and Payment

The total budget shall be proposed by the evaluator and approved by the Consortium. Payment will be disbursed in **tranches**:

- 40% upon approval of Inception Report
- 30% upon completion of fieldwork and submission of draft
- 30% upon submission and approval of the final report