

## Scope of Work

<b>Project/ Consultancy Title:</b>	SPARC Pastoral Strategies Study; Qualitative Research Expert
<b>Project Location(s):</b>	Wau, South Sudan
<b>Level of Effort:</b>	Up to 26 days per consultant (2consultants) expense through 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025

### Background

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

Supporting Pastoralism & Agriculture in Recurrent & Protracted Crises (SPARC) is a six-year (2020-2026) initiative funded by FCDO. The goal is to generate and promote the application of evidence on what works to strengthen the resilience of agricultural and pastoral livelihoods in fragile, drylands contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. The program aims to advance research on livelihoods, agriculture and pastoralism that can be used by FCDO and other agencies to guide decisions on programs and policies to support livelihoods resilience in the drylands. Through research and evidence, SPARC will develop knowledge to enhance the ability of FCDO, the donor community, NGOs, local and national governments and other stakeholders to assist pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers in the context of conflict, climate change, and other shocks and stressors. Mercy Corps is a member of the SPARC consortium with the ODI and the International Livestock Research Institute. Cowater International is the lead firm.

### Purpose / Project Description

SPARC is planning the continuation of a multi-year study in South Sudan; the aim is to conduct a study on “*Enablers of women’s livelihood adaptation and the outcomes of changing household dynamics (Pastoral Strategies 2.0)*”. Pastoralist Strategies 2.0 pursues a line of inquiry into factors of success and struggle, building from the work under Pastoralist Strategies 1.0. This study will deepen our understanding of the elements that enabled women to be successful as they pursued new opportunities and the elements that prevented success

The study aims to collect evidence on how individuals use bricolage strategy (making the most of available resources) in conflict-affected areas and to what outcome. It seeks to gather evidence on whether humanitarian and development organisations can foster an enabling environment that supports women in navigating their own path and manage their changing role in their households and the local economy successfully or without harm

Mercy Corps seeks to hire a qualitative research consultant to implement the fieldwork and participate in analysis activities, with a particular focus on Western Bahr el Ghazal (Wau).

### Key Research Questions

- 1) When bricolage is applied, what factors have the most significant influence on livelihood outcomes for women? How do these factors influence the effectiveness of resources provided by humanitarian and

development programs? These factors include hard and soft skills, monetary and physical assets, social networks, intra-household/family dynamics, innate traits, and education (*this mixes resources and factors*).

- 2) How are the changing roles and aspirations of women influencing intra-household and community dynamics? Are there overlooked needs or challenges that can be supported through development/humanitarian programming?
- 3) Based on preliminary findings to Questions 1 & 2, additional data maybe collected to answer - Is there an enabling environment for successful application of bricolage by women? Can bricolage be scaled in fragile and conflict affected settings?

### Summary of Activities

To implement this research activity in South Sudan, the consultant will conduct one round of interviews before the end of March 2025 (with a target to conduct interviews in February and March).

The consultant will be expected to conduct rigorous, semi-structured interviews with samples of approximately 30 KIIs. The sample will draw on a frame of respondents consulted in previous iterations of this study but may also require the replacement of respondents who are no longer reachable. In this case, the consultants will be responsible for identifying additional respondents meeting specific sampling criteria, which Mercy Corps will provide.

In summary, the Consultant's primary roles will include leading data collection and transcription, participating in analysis activities, supporting the identification of program-relevant learning and recommendations, and collaborating on research instrument design.

### Specific Activities:

The Consultants will:

- Participate in the design of research instruments, including by reviewing tools designed by lead researchers and providing technical feedback particularly to ensure relevance and sensitivity of proposed interview topics.
- Support the facilitator in mobilizing existing cohort of research respondents, to conduct follow-up interviews, which build on themes that emerged in previous research.
- Conduct semi-structured key informant interviews with these respondents, requiring careful and sensitive probing and taking detailed interview notes.
- Comprehensively type interview notes to share with the study team and participate in regular analytical debriefs with members of the broader SPARC research team.
- Review report drafts and provide technical and contextual contributions to the resulting analysis.
- Co-lead qualitative analytical sessions preceding data collection rounds to inform the design of research instruments.
- Engage in post-data collection analysis sessions with a focus on bringing contextual and subject matter expertise to bear, and ensuring relevance, accuracy, and sensitivity of written products.
- Liaise with local stakeholders to maximize awareness and influence/uptake of the research in relevant local fora, including government, NGO, and donor audiences!

### Deliverables

- Thorough review of qualitative research instruments prior to data collection in the field, resulting in written feedback on documents and participation in calls with study team to ensure relevance and contextual sensitivity of tools.
- Type qualitative interview transcripts (approximately 15 interviews), carefully labeled and share with the lead consultant to upload into a SharePoint page for SPARC South Sudan.
- Participation in analytical discussions with the full research team, over the course of field work, to share preliminary findings and discuss priorities for further probing and follow-up in subsequent interviews.
- Review research report drafts, to provide feedback and areas for improvement based on contextual knowledge.

### Essential Qualifications

- Significant previous experience leading qualitative field research and data collection activities, including semi-structured interviewing and focus group discussions, preferably with an international NGO or other aid actor (**least three years of qualitative research experience**)
- Strong communication skills, including both writing and speaking in both local languages and English.

Ability to transcribe interview notes using Microsoft Word efficiently and comprehensively, for sharing with the broader study team (**Technical skills in Microsoft Words, Excel and research analysis skills**)

- Strong knowledge of the Western Bahr el Ghazal context, with the ability to work independently with minimal support to conduct field work on the ground (**Must speak Arabic and be familiar with the context of Western Bar- El -Gazal State**)

### Timeframe / Schedule

This consulting opportunity will entail approximately **26 days per consultant (2consultants)** of work between 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

**Interested candidates are encouraged to complete and submit the SIF by 10 AM on 19th February 2025. The RFP will be sent only to those who have submitted their SIF by the deadline.**

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