

TERMS OF REFERENCE

TON: Women Entrepreneurs Leveraging Innovative Finance in Tonga (WE-LIFT) Project

Position: Gender and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (National)

I. Project Background

1. Tonga's small, climate-vulnerable economy offers limited and uneven opportunities for entrepreneurship, particularly for women. Although women comprise a significant share of the private sector, they remain largely excluded from formal finance and tailored support services. Structural barriers—including rigid collateral requirements, restricted land ownership rights, and the absence of gender-responsive financial products—continue to constrain women's access to credit. While short-term, high-cost microfinance can provide temporary relief, it often reinforces cycles of debt rather than enabling sustainable business growth. Government initiatives have attempted to address financing gaps, but these efforts frequently lack effective targeting, coordination, and integration with business development services (BDS), resulting in financial dependency rather than long-term financial empowerment. The broader BDS ecosystem remains weak, fragmented, under-resourced, and largely unresponsive to women's distinct needs, including unpaid care responsibilities, sector-specific risks, and differing stages of enterprise development. These challenges are compounded by the absence of robust sex-disaggregated data and market analytics, which obscures the economic contributions and financing needs of women entrepreneurs and limits evidence-based policy making and investment decisions.

2. In response, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the Government of Tonga, has designed the proposed Women Entrepreneurs Leveraging Innovative Finance in Tonga (We-LIFT) project. The project is financed through an Asian Development Fund grant under the Sustainable Development Goal 5: Transformative Gender Agenda thematic window and is structured using a financial intermediation modality. The We-LIFT project aims to accelerate women entrepreneurs' access to finance and strengthen their entrepreneurial and financial capabilities by: (i) establishing Tonga's first risk-sharing facility to ease collateral constraints and unlock bank lending to women entrepreneurs through partial credit guarantees; (ii) introducing an enablement fund that provides grants to improve the bankability of informal micro and small enterprises; and (iii) delivering tailored BDS through a proposed business advisory hub, designed to align with the daily realities of women entrepreneurs and strengthen their financial, digital, and business management skills. In parallel, the project will strengthen sex-disaggregated data systems to inform the development of inclusive financial products, targeted support services, and policies that advance gender-responsive private sector development in Tonga. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) will serve as the executing agency, while the Ministry of Trade and Economic Development (MTED) will act as the implementing agency, working closely with the National Reserve Bank of Tonga (NRBT), partner financial institutions (PFIs), and other key stakeholders.

3. Given this context, the Government of Tonga, in collaboration with ADB, is seeking the services of a Gender and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer to lead the project's gender integration and results-based M&E functions, ensuring the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and design and monitoring framework (DMF) are effectively operationalized, performance is systematically tracked, and gender and development results are accurately documented and reported in line with ADB and Government of Tonga requirements.

II. Purpose of the Assignment

4. The Gender and M&E Officer will ensure effective implementation of the We-LIFT project's GAP and results-based M&E framework. The Officer will support achievement of the project's gender equality and development results by systematically tracking performance, strengthening accountability for gender commitments, and ensuring evidence-based reporting in line with the project design and ADB requirements. The role will contribute to improving project quality, learning, and impact throughout implementation.

III. Scope of Work

5. Under the guidance of the Project Manager and in close coordination with the project management unit (PMU), MTED, implementing partners, and ADB, the Gender and M&E Officer will lead the operationalization and day-to-day implementation of the project's GAP and results-based M&E system. The assignment includes developing and maintaining indicators, data collection tools, databases, and reporting templates aligned with the DMF and GAP; collecting, validating, and analyzing quantitative and qualitative, gender-disaggregated data; and monitoring progress against agreed performance and gender targets. The Officer will prepare analytical inputs for quarterly, midterm, and annual progress reports; support data requirements for ADB review missions, evaluations, and the project completion report; and provide technical inputs to ensure project deliverables and operational instruments remain gender-responsive and results-oriented. The scope also covers supporting gender-responsive training and capacity building, contributing to knowledge products and impact evaluations, coordinating with key stakeholders to strengthen gender outcomes, identifying implementation challenges and corrective actions, and building the capacity of PMU and MTED staff in gender-responsive project management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

IV. Detailed Tasks

6. The Officer will be responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the project's GAP and results-based M&E system. Key responsibilities include:

- (i) Lead and coordinate the implementation of the GAP, ensuring gender considerations, targets, and commitments are fully integrated across all project components, outputs, and activities.
- (ii) Ensure women entrepreneurs and other targeted groups have equitable access to project benefits—particularly under Output 2—and systematically monitor participation levels and outcomes.
- (iii) Develop, operationalize, and maintain the project's results-based M&E framework, including indicators, data collection tools, reporting templates, and databases, aligned with the design and monitoring framework (DMF) and GAP.
- (iv) Work closely with the PMU and implementing partners to ensure gender and performance indicators are clearly understood, consistently tracked, and effectively achieved.
- (v) Collect, validate, and analyze quantitative and qualitative data across all project activities, ensuring comprehensive gender-disaggregated data capture.

- (vi) Monitor and document progress against DMF and GAP indicators and maintain an up-to-date results-tracking database to support evidence-based decision-making.
- (vii) Prepare and contribute analytical inputs on gender and performance outcomes for quarterly, midterm, and annual progress reports.
- (viii) Support data collection and evidence preparation for ADB review missions, midterm reviews, evaluations, and the project completion report.
- (ix) Provide ongoing technical input during project implementation to ensure deliverables, operational guidelines, tools, and instruments are gender-responsive, results-focused, and aligned with agreed targets.
- (x) Identify gender-related and M&E implementation risks or challenges, propose corrective actions, and monitor follow-up measures.
- (xi) Contribute to the development of knowledge products, case studies, and communication materials that highlight women's participation, gender equality results, and overall project impact.
- (xii) Support and contribute to deep-dive and impact evaluations of selected project subcomponents (approximately 3–4), as required.
- (xiii) Coordinate with women's organizations, government agencies, private sector partners, and other stakeholders to strengthen gender outcomes and promote knowledge exchange.
- (xiv) Build the capacity of MTED and PMU staff in gender-responsive project management, monitoring, evaluation, and results reporting processes.
- (xv) Perform other related tasks as necessary to strengthen the project's gender integration, monitoring, evaluation, and learning functions.

V. Qualifications

7. The Gender and M&E Officer should hold a degree in gender studies, development studies, economics, social sciences, or a related discipline, with at least five (5) years of combined professional experience in gender mainstreaming and M&E. The candidate must have demonstrated experience implementing GAPs and results-based M&E frameworks for ADB- or other development partner-financed projects. A strong understanding of gender and the private sector development landscape in Tonga is essential, together with proven skills in quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis, and results-based reporting. The role requires solid experience in coordination, facilitation, and capacity building with government and project stakeholders. Prior experience working in Tonga or the Pacific region is preferred, and the Officer must be willing to travel as required. This is a nationally based recruitment; however, if a suitably qualified national candidate is not identified, the recruitment will be extended to candidates from the Pacific region and ADB Pacific developing member countries.

8. Eligibility of Government Officials In accordance with ADB Procurement Directive 3.16(d), government officials and civil servants in Tonga are eligible to apply only if all of the following conditions are met:
 - (i) They are not being hired by the same government agency where they were employed immediately prior to the assignment. ("Immediate" is generally interpreted as approximately one year.)
 - (ii) Their engagement does not create a conflict of interest with their previous public role or responsibilities.
9. Applicants who may fall under this category are advised to seek clarification from the implementing agency where needed.

VI. Output/Reporting Requirements

10. The Gender and M&E Officer will, at a minimum, be responsible for the following outputs/reports:
 - Results-based M&E framework and database.
 - Regular GAP and DMF indicator updates for quarterly and annual reports.
 - Inputs to review missions and the project completion report.
 - Knowledge and communication products on gender and project results.

VII. Line of Reporting, Duration, and Location of the Services

11. This position reports to the Project Manager within PMU, with oversight provided by the Project Director (MTED representative). The services will be provided on a full-time basis over 77 person-months. The assignment will be based in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, with occasional travel to outer islands if needed.
12. The Gender and M&E Officer's performance will be assessed against the responsibilities and tasks outlined above. All deliverables shall be prepared in English and submitted within the agreed timelines and at a level of quality and detail commensurate with the required outputs. Performance will be monitored on an ongoing basis. In the event of unsatisfactory performance, misconduct, incompatibility with the PMU team, MTED, or ADB staff, or other material adverse circumstances, the contract may be terminated with fifteen (15) days' written notice at the discretion of the Government of Tonga, with concurrence from ADB.
13. The assignment is on a time-based contract. Payments will be made upon submission of monthly invoices and timesheets, subject to satisfactory performance and delivery of agreed outputs and reports. The assignment will be subject to annual performance reviews, and continued engagement will be based on satisfactory performance and operational requirements.