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Call for Proposals

To support local LEADER Initiatives in Gagauzia, Taraclia and neighboring rural communities

in the Republic of Moldova

This Call for Proposals is announced in frame of the EU-funded 'Support to Agriculture and Rural Development in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia (SARD)' Programme, implemented by UNDP in the Republic of Moldova (2016-2018).

SARD Programme invites LEADER Local Action Groups, whose territorial partnership covers villages in ATU Gagauzia, Taraclia and neighbouring rural communities to answer this call and apply for support to implementation of the local management and financing principle of the LEADER approach, and the first projects, in 2018.

1. Background

LEADER is an EU initiative, a method and programme instrument to support locally-driven rural development process to reinvent rural areas and create local jobs, since 1991. Since 2013, the LEADER method has been expanded to apply to coastal and urban, as well as rural, areas under the title '**Community-Led Local Development**' (CLLD). It has been implemented in EU pre-accession and neighboring countries with the aid of EU and other donor-financed programmes. The key actors of all local LEADER/Community-Led Local Development initiatives are the so-called Local Action Groups (LAGs) formed by local partners in a bottom-up way. The LAGs are responsible for local governance in development and represent local authorities, businesses and civil society. LAGs decide on the territorial delineation of their activities, establish formal partnerships, prepare and agree on integrated local rural development strategies, and identify and implement local development actions. The LEADER approach is based on specific principles: 'go local' by implementing the territorial, bottom-up and partnership approach; focus on integrated development, sustainability and inclusiveness. The development process is managed locally, and networking and cooperation ensure mutual benefit from the experience.



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2. Programme description

The Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme's main components, implemented in a synergic and comprehensive way, aim to enhance community empowerment, develop local entrepreneurship and SMEs, encourage investment into small-scale infrastructure refurbishments and promote inter-municipal cooperation. Implementation of LEADER (a French acronym meaning *Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy*) and the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach is an innovative, cross-cutting measure of the programme.

Local implementation of the SARD LEADER Measure started with an awareness-raising campaign aimed at mobilizing local partners in targeted regions. The result was the creation of eight local rural development partnerships, covering the greater part of the rural areas of ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia, and the rural municipalities of neighbouring districts. Following LEADER principles, the eight local initiatives have formalized their Local Action Groups (LAGs), which are the first flagships in Moldova. They have designed their strategic action plan, including economic, social, cultural and environmental actions. The programme helps with all necessary human resource development, technical assistance, legal aspects, co-financing and governance. SARD also creates the necessary conditions for networking and cooperation between the LAGs.

3. Objective and purpose

The overall goal of this Call for Proposals is to support piloting LEADER activities implemented by local actors in target territories of the SARD Programme, particularly work on implementation of the local decision making and management principle of the LEADER approach and realization of the first projects, based on the prepared and approved strategic action plan and the internal project selection process of the LAGs.

SARD Programme's intent is to evaluate results of the year 2017 activities of the SARD LEADER LAG initiatives, and provide support to LAG activities to be implemented in 2018. For each LAG, fund



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available range up to **\$30,000**, and it supports one-year activities. Supported LAG activities should be related, but not limited, to the following areas:

- Set up and functioning the LEADER office, the Management Team and the management and financial system of the LAG
- Functioning the LAG Council, Board, Selection Committee and Audit Committee on the base of the approved Mode of Operation of the LAG
- Selection of projects for implementation, relevant to prioritized measures of the LAG Strategic Action Plan introduced in the submitted proposal of the LAG
- Preparing the implementation plan of the selected projects
- Implement the selected projects
- Monitoring and evaluation of the above process, and reporting

4. Eligibility

SARD LEADER supported Local Action Groups formalized by signature of the Partnership Agreement are eligible to submit their proposal to answer this call. Applicant LAGs should organize their first LAG Council Meeting before submitting their proposal. Proposal must be signed by the legal representative of LAG's Accountable Body and the President of the LAG.

Please, note, that LAG's local projects, which's expenses are covered by SARD or other donor(s) will not be eligible (double financing is not allowed).

Eligibility criteria of the LAG partnership and the delineation of the LAG territory. Proposals not meeting these criteria will not be funded.

- Each rural community can be part of only one LAG, and the LEADER territory should be cohesive.
- At least three municipalities should establish LEADER Initiative, and the number of inhabitants covered by the municipalities should be minimum 10 000.
- Urban centers over 10 000 inhabitants should not be part of the LAG, but it is recommended to LAG-s to cooperate on strategic issues with urban centers of their territory.



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- Rate of different stakeholders in a LAG should be based on tri-party balance. Close to one-one-one third of the LAG members should represent public bodies, businesses and civil society representatives.
- In LAG decision making bodies businesses and civil society should be represented by at least 50% of the members + 1 person, local public sector should be represented by 50% of the members - 1 person.
- It is important to identify the common cultural and/or economic and/or historical and/or environmental, etc. background behind the established territorial partnership as a backbone of the necessary territorial cohesion and to give attractive name to the LAG, which is linked to the common identity of the LAG members.
- LAG members should be local organizations and individuals. National, international or regional NGO-s, which have local activists, offices or member organizations in LAG areas, cannot be member of more than one LAG.
- Statement should be signed by legal decision-making body of each member organization about joining the given LAG partnership and the name, function and contact of the elected representative of the given member organization, who will have the voting power in the LAG. Individuals can be members of the LAG by signing a letter of interest and the LAG Partnership Document.
- LAG territories should be delineated by decision of the relevant Local Councils. Local Councils should make decision on joining a given LAG, and the Mayors should sign the LAG Partnership Document.
- LAG Members are those, who sign the LAG Partnership Document.

Eligibility Criteria to the LAG Plans. Proposals not in line with these criteria will not be funded.

All plans submitted should be pre-approved by LAG Council

- Strategic Action Plan
- Five and two years implementation plan
- Estimated budget of the measures, projects included in the strategic plan
- The action plan planned to be implemented with SARD's financial contribution.



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5. Funding

SARD Programme provides fund to implementation of the above activities up to \$30,000 for one year. 20% self-contribution of the LAG is a must. Self-contribution can be provided in cash and/or in kind. In kind contribution details should be included in the filled and submitted Application Form. See attached. The approved SARD Fund should be applied to the following costs:

Eligible local LEADER activities	Max amount of SARD Fund applicable for the given activities	Eligible expenses
Functioning LAG Council and elected bodies, set up and functioning the local LEADER office, Management Team, and the management and financial system of the LAG. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting.	\$5,000	Salaries, office/venue rent, travel costs, maintenance fees, office equipment and office supply.
Local project selection, based on selected measures included in the LAG application, and preparing the concrete implementation plan of the selected projects. First milestone report to SARD (deadline March 31, 2017) should contain the locally approved list of projects, project documents and budgets. Project implementation should start after approval of the first milestone report by SARD.	\$25,000	Limited costs of relevant meetings, travel expenses
Implement LAG selected, SARD confirmed projects		Relevant and efficient costs of the locally selected and SARD confirmed projects.
Total SARD contribution	\$30,000	

6. Duration

One year, without the opportunity of extension. Draft final report should be provided to SARD on 30 November 2018. UNDP SARD Office is assigned to serve as contact point for LAG Accountable Bodies as Contractors.



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7. Proposal review procedures

Proposals are evaluated by a Selection Committee (SC) consisting of EU delegation to Moldova and UNDP Moldova representatives, with SARD office acting as secretariat. The SC's recommendations are forwarded to SARD Programme Board for final approval. Proposal should meet the Eligibility and Submission criteria as laid out in this Call for Proposals. Proposals not meeting these criteria will not be further evaluated and will not be funded. Submitted proposals will be evaluated from the perspective of: **relevance, expected results and impact, feasibility, sustainability and incorporation of local development principles.**

Overall evaluation criteria (Weight in evaluation 30%)

- Is the submitted proposal clearly described and the objectives clearly stated?
- Is the activity plan designed to be successfully completed within one year?
- Are outcomes, impact and deliverables specifically identified?
- Does the proposal meet LEADER/CLLD principles and basic crosscutting criteria (gender balance, sustainability and inclusiveness)?

Criteria to the evaluation of LAGs' participatory Strategic Action Plan (Weight in evaluation 40%), and the one year implementation plan (Weight in evaluation 30%):

To the participatory strategic process, a guideline has been prepared and used by the SARD Local Expert Team and the LAG working groups. Selection Committee will follow this guideline, while evaluates LAGs' strategic documents. Concrete evaluation criteria are the following:

- Relevancy and quality of the local assessment and SWOT analyses included in the Strategic Action Plan
- Level of understanding and identification of the LEADER principles by the LAG – introduced in the SAP
- Relevancy of the Mission Statement and Vision of the LAG to the local values and challenges
- Relevancy of the Objectives to the Mission Statement and Vision of the LAG
- Relevancy and clarity of the selected strategic priorities to the strategic goals and to the collected local action and project ideas



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- Relevancy of the estimated budget to the planned measures, projects
- Relevancy of the 5-year and 2-year action plans to the values, needs, mission, vision and priorities of the LAG
- Innovativeness and weight of the selected flagship projects
- Relevancy to selected priorities and the Action Plans, and timelessness of the development measures selected for SARD implementation

Criteria to the evaluation of the one-year LAG Implementation Plan submitted for SARD finance

<i>Relevance criterion</i> - Focus on priority in the LAG Strategic Action Plan, efficiency of proposed solutions, addressing the needs of vulnerable groups
<i>Results and Impact</i> - Direct, quick and broad impact for the community, its' clear and measurable results and replicability potential
<i>Feasibility</i> - Selected measures' technical, financial, social, environmental characteristics and institutional readiness
<i>Local Development principles</i> - Process transparency, inclusiveness, equality and gender prism
<i>Sustainability criterion</i> - Beneficiaries' ability to maintain results, demonstrated continuity after completion of donor support and community contribution

8. Financial milestones and Reporting

SARD Programme provides advanced fund to contracted LAGs, up to 30% of the contracted amount. Reports on implemented activities should be provided by the LAG Accountable Body to SARD at reporting milestones: March 31, 2018; July 31, 2018; and November 30, 2018 (final report). Payments will be transferred by SARD after reports' approval in three tranches: 30-30 % after approval of first and second report and, 10% after approval of the final report.

9. Submission criteria

LAG Proposals to SARD Programme for financing LEADER/CLLD activities, should include

1. Filled Application Form (in English)
2. LAG Partnership Agreement, signed by all LAG members (scanned)



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3. LAG-approved Rural Development Strategic Action Plan and Implementation Plan, including estimated budget (in English)
4. Minutes of the first LAG Council Meeting (in Russian or Romanian) on approval of the
 - LAG's Strategic Action Plan
 - Mode of Operation of the LAG
 - Location of the LAG office
 - Membership fee
 - The Proposal, which will be submitted to answer the SARD Call
5. Minutes should also include the results of
 - Election of the LAG decision making bodies
 - Selection of the LAG's accountable body

10. Submitting proposals

Please, submit proposals electronically in PDF or in Word cformat to following e-mail address:

Leonid.mazilu@undp.org

The deadline for submission is 23:59:59 your local time on 10 December, 2017. Contact SARD Local Implementation Team for questions or clarifications.

11. Information on further non-financial support of SARD Programme to implementation of the LEADER measure at the local level

SARD Programme provides expertise, training, mentoring and coaching to supported LAGs to ensure the success of the implementation of the submitted proposals. The Programme helps in

- Preparation and submission of the present Proposal
- Implementation of the local management principle by setting up the LAG Management Teams
- Improvement of the local management capacity by training, coaching and mentorship in 2018
- Local project design, submission and implementation, financed by the EU through SARD and other channels starts in January 2018.
- Networking activities of the LAGs will start at local and extended to national/international level.