

Terms of Reference: Expression of Interest

Selection of local partner NGOs for the implementation of ‘Healthy and Resilient Collines’ programme in Burundi

1 Introduction Healthy and Resilient Collines programme

1.1 Introduction Max Foundation

Max Foundation (MF) is an international nonprofit organisation working towards a healthy start in life for every child. Our operations extend to vulnerable communities across the globe, with a current focus on Bangladesh and Ethiopia, and ambitions to expand to Burundi.

Our programmes serve as a ‘design lab’ crafting, evidencing, and scaling innovative solutions in safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), nutrition, food security and maternal health, with the ultimate goal of improved child health. Max Foundation mobilises every player in the system to actively participate in driving lasting change which maximises the impact on child health. This approach is contextualised and rooted in collaboration, with a perpetual spirit of learning, unafraid to adapt when our data, insights, and experiences indicate more efficient pathways towards affording every child the opportunity to not only survive but thrive.

Max Foundation has implemented its innovative integrated Healthy Village approach - which combines Food & Nutrition security (FNS) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions - in Bangladesh since 2012 and in Ethiopia since 2020, with the overall goal to sustainably impact the health and resilience of children and to reduce chronic malnutrition (child stunting). Implementation of the Healthy Village approach over 5-year period (2017-2021) in a programme in southern Bangladesh with a target population of 1.2 million people achieved a drop in the child stunting rate from 51% to 25% (leading to 19K children under 5 no longer stunted).

Max Foundation is currently looking to identify a suitable local implementation partner NGO for its planned new Healthy & Resilient Collines programme in Burundi (now in its pre-inception phase) as to assure a viable Inception phase (as of 2024) after approval of the funding proposal.

1.2 Healthy and Resilient Collines programme focus

The Healthy & Resilient Collines programme is an innovative integrated community-led programme combining FNS and WASH interventions. The overall goal of the programme is to build healthy and resilient collines to reduce chronic malnutrition and improve child health among children under five, enabling them to flourish and develop their full potential.

The Healthy & Resilient Collines programme focuses on mobilizing all stakeholders in communities to change nutrition and hygiene behavior for better child health and incorporates the Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) approach, which works towards resilience-based stewardship, and mobilizes and

motivates households and communities to become good stewards of the land and its natural resources, and to work together towards enhanced resilience.

The Healthy & Resilient Collines programme also includes strengthening of the private sector through supporting Community Health Workers (CHWs) and others to become micro entrepreneurs, who create demand for and sell essential nutrition and health products. They will drive demand for affordable, quality nutrition, sanitation and hygiene products and services – and then meet that demand with quality supply. This also addresses the persistent problems of the unpaid community health worker workforce and insufficient availability of health-related products and services in remote rural areas.

1.3 Why the Healthy & Resilient Collines programme is needed.

Chronic malnutrition or stunting is a significant problem in Burundi, with approximately 56% of children under five years of age being affected, the highest rate in the world. Chronic malnutrition occurs when a child's growth is impaired and can have long-lasting effects on a child's physical and mental development, as well as their future health and well-being.

Several factors contribute to the very high level of chronic malnutrition in Burundi, including chronic food insecurity, lack of awareness on nutritious diets, poor feeding practices, as well as inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, and limited access to healthcare services.

Efforts in Burundi to improve the **nutrition situation** and to reduce chronic malnutrition among children under five have focused on improving agricultural production and access to food, promoting healthy feeding practices, and increasing awareness about nutritious diets. However, progress has been slow due to the political and economic instability in the country and the negative effects of climate change on food security.

Because of **climate change**, the country has been affected in recent years by more irregular and extreme weather leading to protracted dry periods, floods and soil erosion which has had a negative effect on agriculture and food security, and further exacerbated the problem of chronic malnutrition¹. Soil degradation is a major issue, with a recent World Bank – Government of Burundi (GoB) report² stating that Burundi has lost 5.2% of its land area every year to soil degradation since 2020, negatively affecting agricultural production and food security. The National Development Plan aims to restore the 16% degraded lands to their former agricultural productivity, however with climate change this is nowhere near enough to stymie the 200% increase in land degradation expected across the country by 2050, including those 118 collines in the country that have been identified hotspots for soil erosion³.

WASH is a critical component of public health and another driver of chronic malnutrition. In Burundi, access to clean water and sanitation is limited, with only about 9% of the population having access to improved sanitation facilities. This lack of access to clean water and sanitation leads to the spread of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera and typhoid fever which negatively affect child health and contribute to chronic malnutrition. The Burundian government and international and local non-

¹ [Farmers adapt to climate crisis on Burundi's precarious hillsides \(unep.org\)](#). UNEP Climate Change Adaptation unit

² Tackling Climate Change, Land Degradation and Fragility : Diagnosing Drivers of Climate and Environmental Fragility in Burundi's Colline Landscapes - Towards a Multi-Sector Investment Plan to Scale up Climate Resilience, World Bank Group, 2022

³ Burundi: Scaling up climate resilience in the land of 3000 hills, Tall and Dampha, 2023

governmental organizations have made efforts to improve access to clean water and sanitation in the country, but progress has been slow. The lack of infrastructure and funding, as well as political instability and climate change have all contributed to the slow progress.

Regarding access to **health services**, as mentioned 90% of the Burundian population are farmers who often live in remote rural settings far away from health centres, which are generally understaffed and understocked. The public health system selects and trains CHWs (approx. 70% female) to fill this gap and provide community level basic health care. Although the CHW system has great potential it currently is not effective, as most CHW are unpaid and lack resources. The level of care provided by and presence of CHWs in the collines is inconsistent, leading to limited access to basic health care for the communities in the remote areas, which also negatively affects child health.

1.4 An innovative partnership of international and local partners combining proven approaches and expertise, to reach better results together

The complexity of chronic malnutrition requires an integrated approach with different interventions and different partners. This Healthy and Resilient Collines programme in Burundi combines the proven Healthy Village (developed by Max Foundation) and Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) approach (developed by Wageningen University & Research (WENR)), and Healthy Entrepreneurs (HE) expertise on boosting entrepreneurship of health-related products in rural areas in Burundi.

Healthy Village approach

The evidence-based Healthy Village approach focuses on the impact: healthy child growth and combines key elements necessary to tackle the root causes of chronic malnutrition. The approach stands out by combining FNS and WASH to tackle chronic malnutrition and improve child health.

The approach mobilizes the whole community around child health. This is done by changing household and community behaviour for better health with a strong emphasis on peer learning. We focus on both caregivers and communities, regularly measuring child growth as a key trigger for change. Entrepreneurs drive demand for affordable, quality nutrition, sanitation and hygiene products and services – and then meet that demand with quality supply. The migration of ownership to local stakeholders over the course of the Programme, along a five-phase pathway to sustainability ensures continuity. Government tracks and supports Healthy collines in the process. This makes long-lasting results possible. A village is officially declared ‘Healthy’ once everyone (90%+) meets and maintains 18 key indicators covering WASH and FNS.

PIP approach

The Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) approach mobilizes and motivates smallholder farmers to become good stewards of their land and its natural resources and invest in a more resilient (sustainable) farm and household and to work together in their community towards enhanced resilience. Once many such motivated farmers and their households manage their (communal) lands and natural resources well, more profound changes will follow, not only at household level but also at community and landscape levels.

In the PIP approach, motivation is the key to (societal) change: by drawing visions together of a better future farm, smallholder farmers families become motivated and empowered to set concrete goals, achieve these goals step-by-step, and then set new goals to further improve the farm and the wellbeing of the whole household. As such households can break away from the vicious cycle of land degradation, poor production, food insecurity, gender inequality and poverty, and start to produce more food, which

is of greater diversity and better quality, in a more sustainable way. This ultimately impacts whole communities and landscapes.

In a more general sense, the PIP approach aims “to build a solid foundation for sustainable change towards enhanced food production, good land stewardship and improved family wellbeing.” This foundation for sustainable change is based on three principles: motivation, stewardship, and resilience. The PIP foundation principles summarize “what PIP works on,” what the PIP approach aims for, establishing this solid foundation for sustainable change.

Besides these foundation principles, the PIP approach also applies three guiding principles – empowerment, integration, and collaboration – which describe “how PIP works,” hence how organisations and staff involved in the PIP approach work with local actors, and how these actors – as result of working with the PIP approach – change their mindset and behaviour.

Healthy Entrepreneurs expertise

Healthy Entrepreneurs (HE) is a social enterprise which enables Community Health Workers (CHWs) to become entrepreneurs, selling essential (over the counter) medicines and other health related products and disseminating information in hard-to-reach rural communities in different countries in Africa including Burundi. Healthy Entrepreneurs’ business model addresses the persistent problem of the unpaid community health workforce and insufficient provision of health care in rural areas. HE supports the existing healthcare system by engaging existing Community Health Workers (CHWs) in a cost recoverable business that allows them to improve health in their community while generating income.

Integration of proven approaches and expertise

We aim to combine and adapt the proven approaches and expertise outlined above to the Burundi context, building a foundation for sustainable change at different levels, hence not only at farmer household level, but also involving and in close collaboration with other key stakeholders: communities, CHWs, entrepreneurs, local authorities, and finance institutions.

We aim to break down sector silos, combining food and nutrition security, WASH, and entrepreneurship to build resilience, tackle chronic malnutrition and improve child health from more than one angle. We believe it will lead to better results. While many speak about integrated programmes with few practical examples, we are on the cutting edge. As an innovative, scalable programme we prioritize evidence gathering and learning besides field level implementation, aiming for adoption, and mainstreaming of our approach’s best practices in ‘tanker’ programmes undertaken by large institutions such as, principally, the Government of Burundi (GoB) but also UNICEF, WFP, and others. As part of the strong ‘Evidence & Learning & Scaling’ focus, information on what works (evidence) will be actively shared with the major stakeholders.

For the field implementation of the Healthy & Resilient Collines programme Max Foundation is looking for a local NGO implementation partner (registered as local NGO in Burundi) who will also work closely together within the programme with the other partners mentioned earlier: WUR and Healthy Entrepreneurs.

2 Programme Goal, objectives and key intervention areas

2.1 Goal

To build healthy and resilient collines as a foundation for reduced chronic malnutrition and improved child health among children under five, based on the introduction of enhanced sustainable farming practices, good land stewardship, improved WASH services and improved access to nutrition and other health related products.

2.2 Programme objectives

IMPLEMENTATION related

- Improved social cohesion and collaboration within communities
- Enhanced sustainable farming practices and sound natural resources management at household and community level.
- Reduced undernutrition among children under 5
- Improved nutrition among children under five, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women.
- Improved community access to and increased use of sustainable and affordable WASH hardware and services.
- Improved community access to quality and affordable nutrition and other health related products

LEARNING, EVIDENCE, and ENGAGEMENT related

- Learnings, evidence, and best practices on the Healthy & Resilient Collines approach gathered, documented, and disseminated to enable replication and scale-up in Burundi.
- Government of Burundi is supported in developing and implementing national guidelines and approaches to reach a reduction in chronic malnutrition.

To achieve the objectives and overall goal, the **Healthy & Resilient Collines programme** is designed as a fully integrated multi-sector programme, consisting of three key intervention areas and two cross-cutting themes that are the most essential for improving child health and reducing chronic malnutrition in a long-lasting and effective way.

2.3 Foundation principles

The Healthy and Resilient Collines programme will incorporate the foundation principles motivation, stewardship, and resilience, which will be applied and stimulated in the different intervention areas to build a foundation for sustainable change. Besides these, the guiding principles empowerment, integration and collaboration will also be emphasized and used during implementation of the Healthy and Resilient Collines programme.

Workshops and modules on these principles will be conducted with all key stakeholders involved in the program, as such creating the required enabling environment for scaling, and enhancing local ownership and sustainability of all activities. These principles therefore strengthen the “integration” of all activities in the programme, change mindsets at various levels, and make this a broadly supported programme embedded in local structures. While simultaneously creating plans to which other development partners active in the targeted collines and communes can contribute to and step into.

2.4 Key intervention areas and cross cutting themes:

Key intervention areas:

1. Food and Nutrition Security (FNS)

- Sustainable agricultural practices
- Colline level PIPs and enhanced resilience
- Access to nutritious food & diet diversity
- Child Growth Monitoring and Promotion

2. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- Safe sanitation and hygiene
- Multiple Use Water Systems (MUS)

3. Entrepreneurship and Access to Finance

- Marketing of affordable and quality nutrition and other health related products
- Marketing of agricultural products, linkages / access to markets
- Sanitation marketing – sustainable and affordable WASH hardware and services
- Access to Finance: VSLAs and MFIs

Cross-cutting themes:

- Gender equality and social inclusion
- Climate Resilience

1: Food and Nutrition Security (FNS)

Sustainable agricultural practices: The focus is on empowerment and motivation of farmer households to work towards establishing more resilient farming systems by means of the PIP approach. Central here is the process of PIP-creation (vision building, action planning) at the farm household level, which strengthens mutual understanding and respect between men and women and facilitates collective action at group and colline level.

This is directly followed by capacity building on integrated sustainable land and farm management. Capacity building is done through farmer- to-farmer transfer of knowledge on sustainable crop and land management practices that households apply on their individual plots, relevant for the cropping systems at hand. Nutrition aspects / nutrition sensitive agriculture will also be incorporated in household PIP plans (getting the right minerals/vitamins, crop diversification for micro-nutrients, etc.)

Colline PIPs and enhanced resilience: based on the creation of colline PIPs/visions following the PIP approach, communities will define collective activities and priorities, get organized, better structured and with an integrated plan for the colline. This can cover environmental, social, and economic aspects and links to all other activities of the project. The colline PIP is the point of entry for social cohesion and enhanced resilience, both social and physical, with emphasis on sound natural resource management throughout the colline (related to sustainable farming, but also to community health issues and FNS).

Access to nutritious food and diet diversity: By promoting (the production of) nutritious food, dietary diversity and improving food storage, the availability and intake of nutritious food at household and community level will improve. Awareness raising activities will target parents and caregivers during courtyard sessions, besides children at schools. This will include 'Essential Nutrition Actions'¹ (ENA) such

as improving (breast)feeding and caring practices, food hygiene, homestead and school gardening, entrepreneurs selling nutrition products, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and collaboration with Learning and Nutritional Rehabilitation Centers (Maman Lumière).

Child Growth Monitoring and Promotion (GMP) is a key activity in the programme, providing data to monitor programme impact on chronic malnutrition reduction. It also serves as a strong motivator for parents and caregivers; the realization their child has stunted growth triggers them to change hygiene and nutrition behaviour. Through peer learning, parents and caregivers learn about good and risky practices.

2: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Safe sanitation and hygiene: The programme will work on improving the WASH infrastructure (latrines, washing basins, cooking area, etc.) and strengthen the awareness of local communities of the importance of safe sanitation and hygiene behaviour. Awareness raising activities will target parents and caregivers during courtyard sessions, besides children at schools and will include topics like: ODF-campaign, Baby WASH, Hygiene practices such as handwashing at critical times, sanitation and environmental health of the immediate housing environment including safe solid and liquid waste management as well as vector control measures. WASH aspects like, for example, improving sanitation and hygiene in and around the house will also be incorporated in household level PIP-plans.

Multiple Use Water Systems (MUS): The focus is on water in food security. By promoting Multiple Use Systems, the availability of safe water for drinking, domestic needs (personal hygiene) and agricultural production, including rearing livestock, will increase. The provision of water close to home will reduce time for fetching water. Depending on the context improvements in access to safe water at community level will be included in the programme. FNS will be improved, through the availability of water to produce nutritious food for own consumption or sale. By addressing the local water value chain, through reusing, recycling, and retaining of water (e.g., grey water), water from source to tap and beyond will be valued.

3: Entrepreneurship and Access to Finance

Marketing of affordable and quality nutrition and other health related products: The programme plans to work with existing Community Health Workers (CHWs) and to build their capacity to become entrepreneurs. As entrepreneurs they will create demand for and sell good quality and affordable nutrition, hygiene and other health related products at household and community level, which are important to achieve the objectives.

The entrepreneurs will receive training in various aspects of entrepreneurship and other support like a start-up kit of products (on a loan basis) and the option to easily order and receive products on regular basis for sales in the community.

Marketing of agricultural products, linkages / access to markets: market access is often one of the main bottlenecks for smallholder farmers, especially when markets are distant, roads in bad condition, or quality of products not sufficient to compete. The programme will therefore do a market study to identify main bottlenecks, and (often together with local authorities and market actors) support addressing these bottlenecks. Similarly, the programme will support smallholder entrepreneurs, to access local markets, e.g. by organizing themselves in producer groups, improve the quality of their products, or support certain (niche) value chain opportunities in the collines or communes.

Sanitation marketing: Sanitation entrepreneurs often struggle with a limited demand, as well as their marketing and the quality of their products. With our programme, and in cooperation with the other players the program is to strengthen the entrepreneurs' capacity in marketing. Sanitation Marketing focuses on the development of the marketplace. It helps entrepreneurs to produce and supply sanitation products and services based on demand. Trained entrepreneurs are expected to engage as commissioned agents to create demand in the communities. This results in them producing better quality latrines. They are expected to make them available in different price ranges. Consequently, there is an upward trend in their sales results.

Access to finance: Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and MFI's: The programme will also improve access to finance for households (small holder farmers and entrepreneurs) through VSLAs. Existing VSLAs will be strengthened or – if not yet existing – new VSLAs established to support households wanting to purchase or invest in agricultural, nutrition or WASH products and services and households / entrepreneurs planning to offer these as a livelihoods/business opportunity. Interested members from VSLAs are invited to join different types of training on e.g., production of nutritious food, crop diversification, improved storage techniques, waste, and nutrients for increased production. Once financing is accessible for small holder farmer households, customers and entrepreneurs through microfinance institutions and Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs), the capital investment for agricultural, nutrition WASH and other health related products and services will increase, so that the increased demand - because of changed behaviour – can be met.

Cross cutting themes:

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: We will incorporate a Gender Transformative Approach in all intervention areas, based on the assumption that addressing root causes of inequality and discrimination (norms, beliefs) will increase universal access and use of FNS and WASH products and services and contribute to greater inclusion in society and benefits beyond FNS and WASH.

This will include, women in decision-making, with attention to women's interests and the workload of women, as well as empowering them in the families and households and as entrepreneurs. Current and prospective mothers (women and adolescent girls) are key to influencing practices that affect child health. However, current, and prospective fathers must be engaged as well to address gender inequities and ensure sustainable child health outcomes.

Climate Resilience: Droughts, flooding, and erratic rainfall are a risk that can lead to lower agricultural production, land degradation, increased food and nutrition insecurity, and WASH slippage (return to previous unhygienic behaviour). Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures will be incorporated in the programme. By building responsiveness of local management and support structures, strengthening local supply and demand, and climate adaption measures, we will increase the likelihood of agricultural production and WASH services being sustained and improve household and community resilience.

2.5 Time frame

It will be a 5-year programme from mid-2024-mid 2029.

2.6 Budget

Available budget is expected to be around EUR 3 mln. Cost efficiency is an important element of the programme, meaning we are looking for value for money reaching as many people as possible with the available budget. Own investment by households, communities, and government (for BoP group) should be incorporated as much as possible.

2.7 Area selection criteria

The area of implementation of this programme within Burundi is at this stage flexible. We prefer to implement in areas where the PIP approach has already been implemented (meaning the programme focuses on PIP follow up, leveraging PIP investments done and knowledge available) and leverages on existing relevant complementary programs (like cash transfer and/or other WASH programs etc) and other EKN funded programs. The area selection should be based on “value for money” principle, looking at the following criteria.

1. High chronic malnutrition
2. High population density
3. Linkages with other relevant complementary programs (like cash transfer) and other EKN funded programs.
4. Build upon PIP/and or other nutrition/FNS programs

The local NGO implementation partner should motivate why certain areas (communes, collines) should be selected, based on the above criteria. We aim for full coverage in each commune /colline (in 1 or maximum 2 provinces)

3 Roles of Max Foundation and partners within the Healthy and Resilient Collines programme partnership

Specific roles of each partner within the Healthy and Resilient Collines programme will be defined at a later stage. However, for now the table below provides a (tentative) high-level overview of the planned roles of Max Foundation and the different partners.

ROLES – high level	MF	WENR	HE	Local NGO
Overall coordination / consortium lead	X			
Monitoring & evaluation	X	support	support	support
Learning, evidence, and engagement	X	support	support	support
Technical assistance / guidance for Implementation: FNS (PIP)		X		
Technical assistance / guidance for Implementation: Nutrition, GMP, WASH, Entrepreneurship	X			
IMPLEMENTATION – intervention areas				
<i>FNS</i>				
Sustainable agricultural practices				X
Colline level PIPs and enhanced resilience				X
Access to nutritious food & diet diversity			X (awareness)	X
Child Growth Monitoring and Promotion (GMP)				X
<i>WASH</i>				
Safe sanitation and hygiene			X (awareness)	X
Multiple Use Water Systems (MUS)				X
<i>ENTREPRENEURSHIP and ACCESS to FINANCE</i>				
Marketing of affordable and quality nutrition and other health related products			X	
Marketing of agricultural products, linkages / access to markets				X
Sanitation marketing – sustainable and affordable WASH hardware and services				X
Access to Finance: VSLAs and MFIs				X

4 Guidance for applicants

Max Foundation is requesting local NGO's who are interested to become implementation partner in the Healthy & Resilient Collines programme, to develop a Concept Note and other documents that are part of the application package as specified below, using the information on the programme provided in this Terms of Reference document.

1. Concept Note template
2. PNGO information form
3. PNGO eligibility form
4. PNGO Budget template

Submission Guideline:

If your organisation is interested to become local NGO implementation partner in the Healthy & Resilient Collines programme, please send an electronic copy of the completed application package in English to leen@maxfoundation.org with cc: to joke@maxfoundation.nl by **before December 18, 2023**. Explore www.maxfoundation.org for the application package. No late submission will be accepted.

Application and selection process: Timetable

Activity	Deadline
Pre-inception phase (2023)	
Sharing of Application of Terms of Reference: Expression of Interest	14 November 2023
Submission of the concept note by applicant(s)	18 December 2023
Shortlisting of potential partner(s) by Max Foundation	January 2024
Field visit of potential partner(s) in Burundi	January/February 2024
Final selection of partner	February 2024
Program design & funding proposal (selected partner together with Max Foundation)	March – April 2024

Please take note of the following:

- We are only accepting registered local NGO's active in Burundi only (not international NGOs)
- A consortium or joint venture of organisations will not be eligible to apply.
- Interested organisation should meet primary qualifying criteria otherwise the application will be rejected.
- Preliminary qualified organisations will be evaluated according to information provided in Partner NGO application package to make a short list.
- Only the shortlisted organisations will be visited, verified, and further evaluated according to the information and documents provided with EoI/application.
- Max Foundation keeps all rights reserved about the selection and funding process.

ⁱ WHO, 'Essential Nutrition Actions: Improving Maternal, Newborn, Infant and Young Child Health and nutrition', 2013