Terms of Reference

Midterm Evaluation of a 5-year USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project in Cameroon

Implementer: Nascent Solutions Inc. (Nascent)

Funder: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Location: Adamawa, East, North and North West regions of Cameroon

Duration: January-August 2027

Purpose of this ToR: To solicit bids for a midterm evaluation for Nascent's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project in Cameroon. This will continue a quasi-experimental evaluation set up at baseline.

Project Description

This is a five-year project funded under USDA's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Implemented by Nascent, the project is designed to improve the literacy of school-age children through improved literacy instruction, student attentiveness, and student attendance. Secondarily, the project intends to increase the use of positive health and dietary practices. The project runs from 2024-2029.

The staple activity is the provision of a daily lunch and periodic take-home rations using food commodities provided by USDA and procured locally. Concurrently, Nascent will seek to improve:

- Quality of literacy instruction, through more consistent teacher attendance, better teaching and learning materials, and training of teachers and administrators;
- Student attentiveness, through extracurricular activities, and the daily lunch program;
- Student attendance, through school infrastructure improvements, enrollment outreaches, an increased community understanding of the benefits of education, and a reduction in health-related absences;
- Use of positive health and dietary practices, through increased knowledge of hygiene, safe food preparation, and nutrition, as well as increased access to clean water and sanitation, preventative health interventions, and safe food preparation and storage items.
- The environment in which schools operate, through enhancing school infrastructure, the capacity of local government and civil society, as well as local education- and nutrition-related policies and financing.

The project will benefit 190,000 students, teachers, administrators, civil servants, parent-teacher association members, and others associated with 260 primary schools in the Adamawa, East, North, and North West regions of Cameroon. The targeted schools include government-run public schools, and private schools including those affiliated with the Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Islamic faiths. The 260 schools have approximately 147,000 enrolled students from nursery through grade level 6. Nascent and its technical partners - School to School International, the University of Illinois/AgReach, Malnutrition Matters, and World Education - collaborate

with several Ministries (Basic Education, Public Health, Water and Energy, Agriculture and Rural Development, Decentralization and Local Development, Social Affairs, and External Relations) to meet the objectives above.

Purpose and Use

The midterm evaluation will inform Nascent, USDA, and implementation partners of the project's impact and progress. We will use its content to 1) assess progress in project implementation; 2) provide a signal of the effectiveness of interventions; 3) reassess our theory of change; 4) make mid-course corrections; 5) document lessons learned; and 6) emphasize the most viable sustainability paths to stakeholders.

Research Questions

Nascent will employ the OECD evaluation framework.

Criteria	Questions	Suggested Methodology (pending evaluator advice)
Impact	Establish midterm figures at project and comparison schools for the following key outcome indicators: • MGD SO1: What percentage of students, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text (French and English)? (This will break down into several indicators aligned with EGRA subtasks, as well as a composite indicator of multiple subtasks.) • MGD 1.1: What percentage of teachers engage in "active instruction" for 50%+ of classroom time? • MGD 1.2: For what percentage of classroom time are ≥5 students "off-task"? • MGD SO2: What percentage of school-age children are observed correctly washing their hands? • MGD SO2: What percentage of women of reproductive age consume a diet of minimum diversity? • MGD SO2 / 1.3.2: What percentage of parents and teachers report poor health as the most important reason for student absences from school? • MGD SO2 / 2.3: Prevalence of thinness among school-age children (defined as <−2 SD from the median BMI-for-age of the WHO growth reference)	Quantitative surveys. Several of these indicators require disaggregation by sex and/or age. Evaluators will utilize Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA), Stallings teacher observations, dietary diversity surveys, and handwashing observations.

Relevance / Coherence	• Is the project's results framework consistent with stakeholder and beneficiary views? • Is project design consistent with Cameroon's Education and Training Sector Strategy and draft National School Feeding Policy? • How well are the US and local commodities aligned with cultural preferences?	Conduct key informant interviews and semi-structured focus group discussions regarding Nascent's school graduation model among teachers, PTA members, and education and school feeding officials in government.
Sustainability	• Do stakeholders view the school feeding graduation model as feasible and likely to succeed? • Will local commodity procurement contribute to sustainability differently than US-based commodity procurement?	Conduct key informant interviews and semi-structured focus group discussions regarding Nascent's school graduation model among teachers, PTA members, and education and school feeding officials in government.
Effectiveness	• For performance indicators, what level of progress has been made against the baseline figures and against targets?	Conduct a desk review of the Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), baseline survey report, target figures, associated databases, and semi-annual reports.
Efficiency	• Are the activities implemented on budget? • Which outputs were obtained most efficiently? Which were obtained least efficiently? • Will the project allocate resources differently in the future? • How have the local procurement commodity and internal transportation costs, speed, and quality compared to procurement from the US?	Conduct key informant interviews among Nascent staff and partners. Review commodity procurement documentation.

Study Design

At baseline, Nascent and an external evaluation firm set up a repeat cross-sectional, quasi-experimental impact study design, utilizing a difference-in-differences analysis method. There are three study groups: 1) a comparison group receiving no interventions from Nascent; 2) an intervention group of schools which were supported in Nascent's 2018-23 MGD project and continue to receive all interventions from Nascent in this 2024-29 project; and 3) an intervention group of "new" schools which were not supported in Nascent's 2018-23 MGD project but receive all interventions from Nascent in this 2024-29 period.

The evaluators will mimic the cluster sampling strategy and size of the baseline survey (see "How to Apply" section below), with schools as the primary sampling unit, and students/classrooms/parents as the secondary sampling unit, depending on the key indicator. Stratification must occur at the regional level. The midterm evaluation will utilize data collection tools in the same manner as the baseline survey.

Qualitative data will be collected using similar methods as the baseline survey. Qualitative sampling will be purposive, seeking a broad representation of viewpoints. Data will be collected using focus groups and/or key

informant interviews targeting local stakeholders such as parents, head teachers, teachers, older students, and education and other government officers. Nascent and the evaluators will jointly agree on stakeholders who should be interviewed, accompany enumerators to schools, or attend a dissemination workshop. Evaluators will also take advice from stakeholder key informants about other possible key informants. Analysis will identify key themes.

Estimated timeline

Item	Started	Completed
Design	December 2026	March 2027
Logistical arrangements	January 2027	March 2027
Training enumerators	April 2027	April 2027
Data collection	April 2027	May 2027
Data cleaning	May 2027	June 2027
Data analysis and visualization	May 2027	June 2027
Report writing	June 2027	July 2027
Reviews of drafts by Nascent	July 2027	August 2027
Submit report to USDA	August 2027	August 2027

Deliverables

Deliverable	Deadline (negotiable)
Evaluation inception report, explaining how evaluators will operationalize the evaluation in question (design, methodology, ethics plan, quality assurance plan, training agendas, etc.), to be submitted after a desk review and consultations with Nascent. This inception report will include the survey tools, focus group discussion protocols and/or key informant interview questions.	Early February 2027
Report: A concise written narrative, in **English only** (section 508 compliant).	Mid June 2027
Stand-alone 5-page briefing on the evaluation. This is viewed as a polished and widely accessible executive summary. It will allow Nascent and USDA to easily disseminate content. This should be in **English and French.**	July 2027
Clean datasets in .csv format	July 2027
Presentation: Maximum of 40 PowerPoint slides highlighting key themes of the report. This should be in **English and French**.	July 2027
Deliver oral presentation to USDA.	August 2027

Profile of Evaluation Team

Firms and groups of independent consultants are welcome to apply. Team member skills should be complementary, with one person identified as the Team Lead, who will bear responsibility for all work products. Combined, the team should have the following skills and attributes:

- Demonstrated experience leading complex impact evaluations.
- Demonstrated expertise in study design and sampling.
- Demonstrated experience in the development of quantitative data collection tools and managing field data using SurveyCTO and Tangerine for digital data collection.

- Demonstrated experience in using qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews.
- Demonstrated experience in data management and analysis using statistical software, including analyzing complex (multi-stage cluster samples) surveys.
- Demonstrated experience using propensity score matching and difference-in-differences analysis techniques.
- Demonstrated experience in concise, illuminating report writing, including data visualization.
- Demonstrated experience in training and managing field data collectors and complex logistics.
- Subject matter expertise in literacy and education.
- Subject matter expertise in maternal nutrition, child nutrition, and hygiene.
- Strong teamwork ability across cultures and time zones.
- Demonstrated cultural sensitivity and gender balance to effectively communicate with a variety of stakeholders, ranging from young students to government officials.
- Experience with EGRA.
- Experience with the Stallings teacher observations method.
- Experience with dietary diversity surveys.
- Experience with USDA McGovern-Dole projects.
- Experience in Cameroon.
- High proficiency in written and verbal French.
- High proficiency in written and verbal English.

How to Apply

Interested evaluators should apply by submitting the following documents in a single PDF no later than 2 November 2026. Submissions must be made via e-mail to recruitment@nascents.org with the subject line "MGD Cameroon midterm evaluation bid 2026".

1. Organizational/team capacity statement outlining relevant evaluation experience and ability to perform the evaluation with methodological rigor. This should be a maximum of 5 pages.
2. CV of each proposed evaluator with his/her role clearly identified. Please limit CVs to no more than 3 pages per person.
3. Financial proposal that includes (in US dollars only):
    1. Daily fee and days required for each team member
    2. Estimated expenses attributable to each team member (as noted below, several expenses are paid for directly by Nascent. Do not include them in this financial proposal). This might include, for example, airfare for team members travelling to Cameroon.

Please note:

- Data collection will occur in French, English, and some local languages when necessary.
- Nascent will arrange and directly pay for the items below. These should not be included in the proposed budget.

    - Field-level data collectors/enumerators and supervisors (to be discussed further with evaluators)
    - Ground transport for enumerators during data collection
    - Printing, copying, and routine office supplies
    - Venues and food at trainings/meetings for enumerators
    - Nascent possesses 60 Android tablets which can be used for data collection (and mostly eliminate the need for data entry)

- Mobile data collection subscriptions (Tangerine, SurveyCTO)

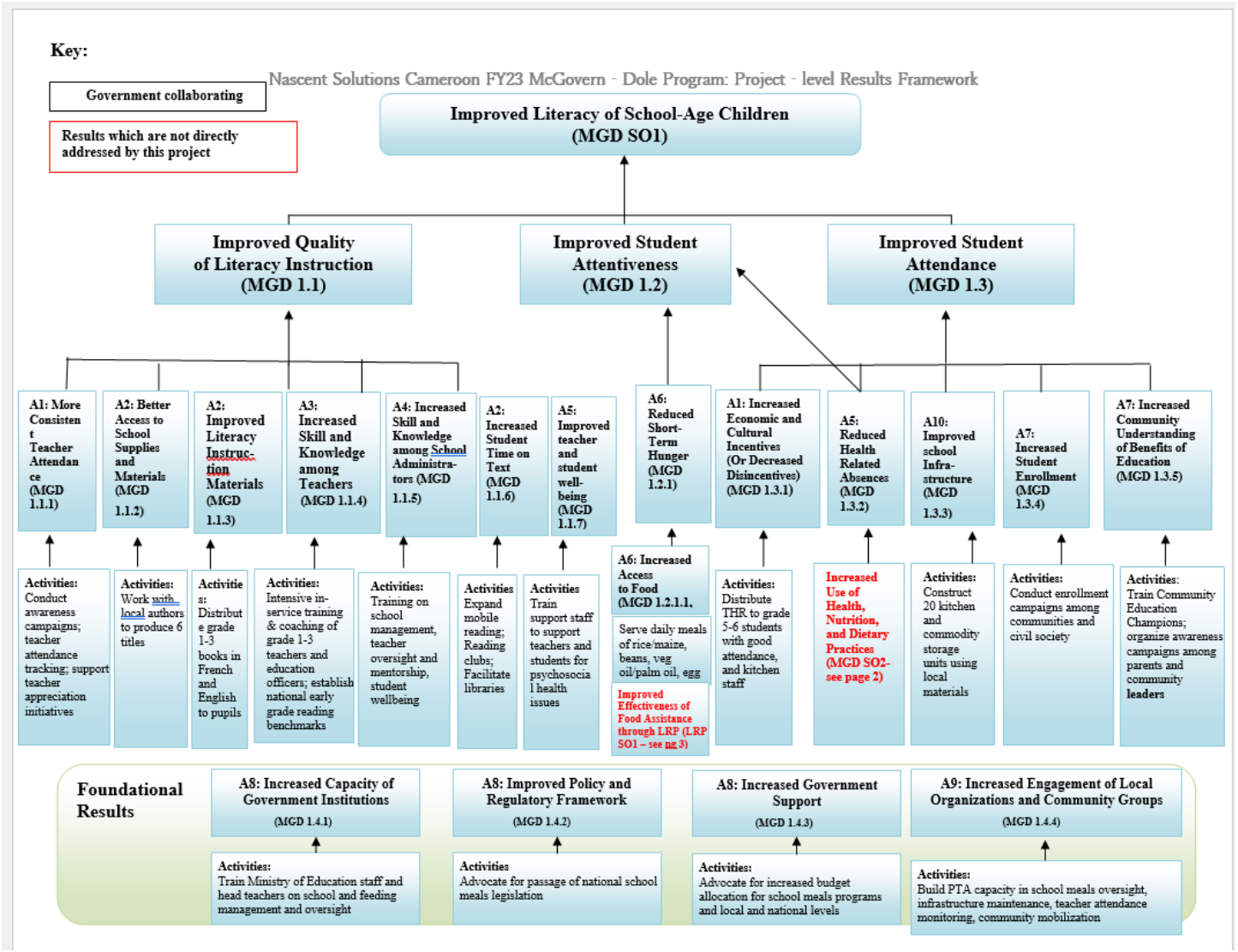
These parameters may be useful when constructing your financial proposal:

1. The baseline reached 67 intervention schools and 20 comparison schools. 35 of those 87 schools were in the North, 12 in Adamawa, 7 in the East region, and 33 in the North West region.
2. See below the sample sizes achieved during the baseline.

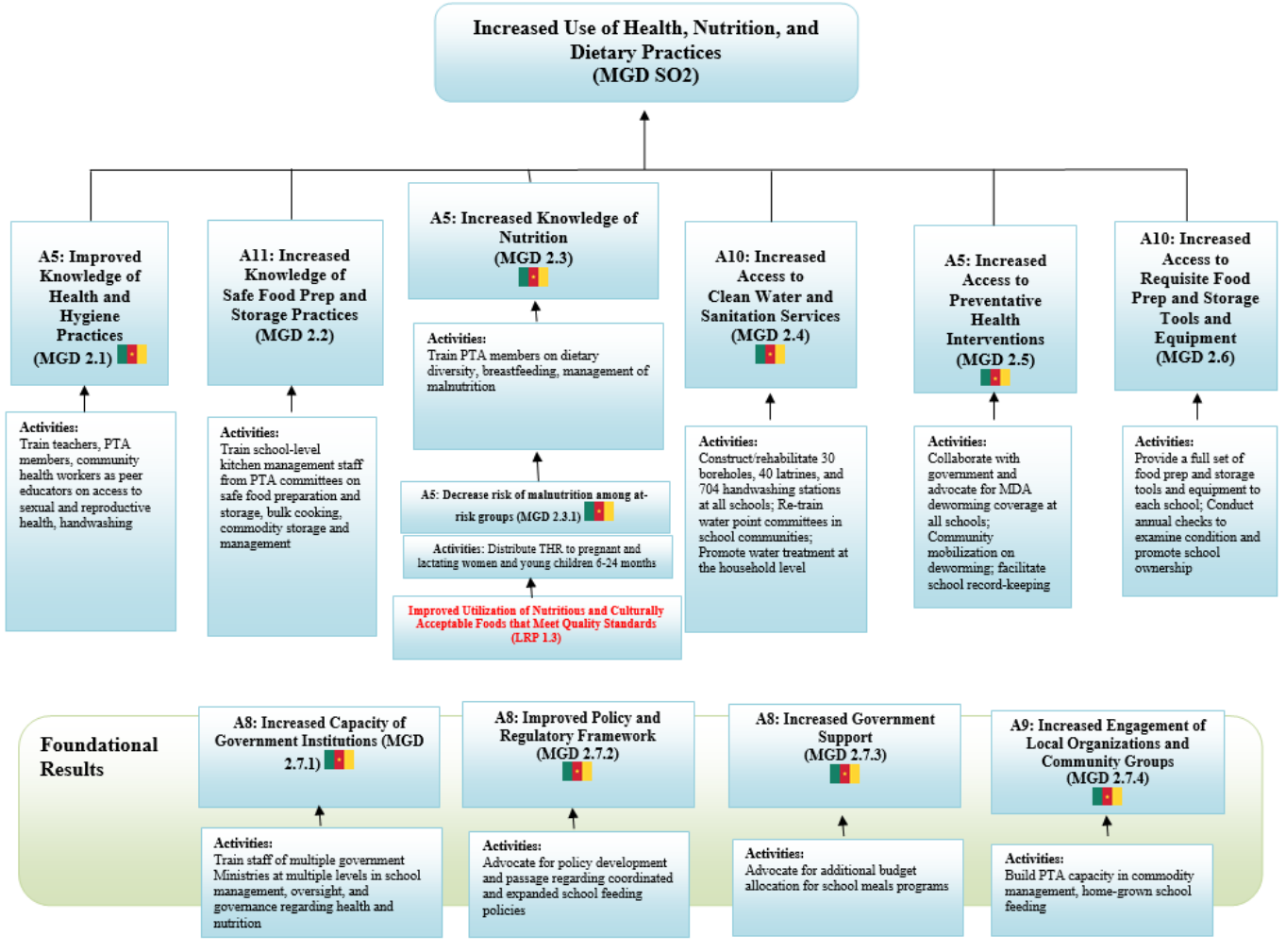
Impact Questions	Total sample (intervention + comparison)
MGD SO1: What percentage of students, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text (French and English)? (This will break down into several indicators aligned with EGRA subtasks, as well as a composite indicator of multiple subtasks.)	1,315 grade 2 students
MGD 1.1: What percentage of teachers engage in "active instruction" for 50%+ of classroom time?	246 classrooms
MGD 1.2: For what percentage of classroom time are ≥5 students "off-task"?	246 classrooms
MGD SO2: What percentage of school-age children are observed correctly washing their hands?	1,740 students
MGD SO2: What percentage of women of reproductive age consume a diet of minimum diversity?	896 women
MGD SO2 / 1.3.2: What percentage of parents and teachers report poor health as the most important reason for student absences from school?	1,137 women
MGD SO2 / 2.3: Prevalence of thinness among school-age children (defined as <−2 SD from the median BMI-for-age of the WHO growth reference)	1,191 students

3. The baseline conducted 38 key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 108 government staff, Nascent staff, and other stakeholders.
4. Nascent requires the sampling strategy to allow for comparisons between male and female students, as well as two age categories for some Impact questions.

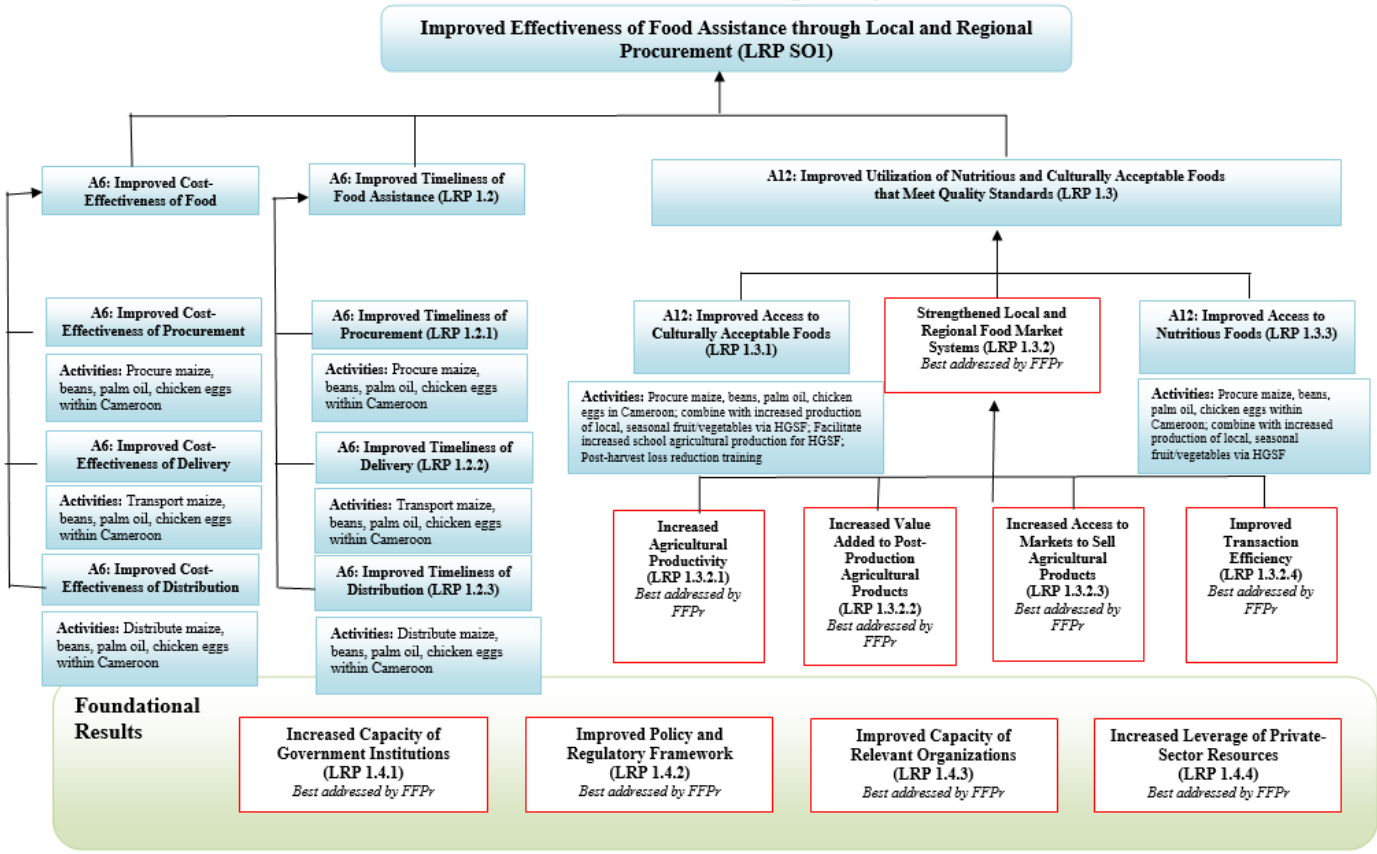
Appendix: Project Results Framework



Nascent Solutions Cameroon FY23 McGovern - Dole Program: Project - level Results Framework



Nascent Solutions Cameroon FY23 McGovern - Dole Program: Project - level Results Framework



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