

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Mid-term Evaluation of the Nawimana SAARC Cultural Centre Project, Matara - 2025

1. Background and Description of the Project

Overview of the Project:

The decision to establish a SAARC Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka was taken at the 10th SAARC Summit (Colombo, 1998) and reaffirmed by the Council of Ministers in 1999 (Nuwara Eliya). The Government of Sri Lanka committed to providing a plot of land and LKR 50 million to initiate the project. In this context, the Government offered to establish a SAARC Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka to promote the distinctive arts of South Asia. In fulfilment of this pledge, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have taken steps to establish the SAARC Cultural Centre in Matara.

The prime objective of constructing a SAARC Cultural Centre is to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of the region and support the traditions and rich cultural diversity through connection of a cultural centre. This centre will function as a major meeting point for the artistic communities in the region and to initiate programme aimed at encouraging and assisting traditional artistries from the region

The project was commenced on 14th November 2008, and the estimated cost of the project was Rs. 500 million through GOSL funding arrangements. The construction work of this centre has been entrusted to the Sri Lanka Army. The facilities of the centre include an auditorium, theatre hall and rehearsal rooms, seminar halls, exhibition area, open-air theatre and open site, museum, studios for audio-visual recordings, film halls, information technology chambers, residential facilities, cafeterias, and quarters for officers and residential staff.

The activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre expected to be conducted are as follows

- Conduct periodic "SAARC FESTIVALS OF CULTURE"
- Conduct SAARC annual arts festivals
- Conduct film festivals

- Conduct programmes for school children to familiarize themselves with the cultures of the region.
- Regional and global networking artistes.
- Conduct seminars, conferences, workshops, art camps, literacy events, book exhibitions, short study courses.
- Conduct master classes of short duration by invited experts in different fields of Art.
- Conduct cultural exchange programmes, exhibitions of painting, sculpture, photography, archaeology and performances of dance, drama and music
- Video and audio productions, archives and library facilities.

It was estimated that 65% of civil construction work had been completed as of June 2025. However, due to administrative, financial, and logistical constraints, there has been prolonged project stagnation. Given the considerable public investment and strategic cultural relevance, the Ministry seeks to carry out mid-term project evaluation and assess the results achieved at this mid-point and to provide recommendations and lessons learnt that would enable the achievement of overall project objectives and help inform the design of future new interventions.

2. Purpose of Evaluation

The main purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to assess the results achieved up to now and provide recommendations and lessons learnt that will enable the ministry and the government to make informed decisions on the future direction of the project and take strategic decisions to transform the project into a viable condition.

Key objectives of the mid-term evaluation are:

- a) To assess the design, implementation and progress made towards the achievement of the project results;
- b) To assess the utilization of resources and the strategies used to carry out the project;
- c) Taking into account intended users of the evaluation, identify lessons learned and provide recommendations for the future direction of the project.

Finally, the evaluation will provide valuable information for the government, policymakers, and the implementing agency for continuous improvement and take corrective actions to bring the project into the right direction. These recommendations will also guide future

similar projects to be designed and implemented successfully. The evaluation has to be carried out as per National Evaluation Policy Implementation Framework.

3. Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation will consider the overall performance of the project, the overall project design, and implementation processes. For this purpose, the evaluation will focus on the following areas as described below.

- Assess the project's relevance to assess the appropriateness of project objectives to the problems that it was supposed to address and to the policy environment within which it operated.
- Evaluate the project's effectiveness to understand the degree to which the activities carried out meet the objectives of the project.
- Evaluate the efficiency in project implementation with special focus on utilization of resources, time management and decision making.
- Evaluate the sustainability of the cultural centre, as the progress achieved so far is sustainable.

4. Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation should address the following key evaluation questions. However, it is encouraged during the inception phase to critically review the key evaluation questions stipulated and make necessary changes to achieve the evaluation objectives.

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions to be answered
Relevance	Was a needs analysis carried out at the beginning of the project reflecting the various needs of different stakeholders?
	How does the project align with national development plans and the national strategy?
	What and how well progress have been made towards achieving the overall outputs of the project?
Efficiency	Have project activities been delivered in a time manner?
	What are the factors caused for the delay in completion of the project?
	Do the project activities completed justify the costs incurred?

	What are the factors contributed for the cost increase in construction?
Effectiveness	Was the project effective in delivering desired/planned results?
	Have the quantity and quality of the outputs produced so far been satisfactory?
	If planned scope of work not completed due to termination of the work contract or any other reasons, what measure were taken to complete the original scope of work.
Sustainability	To what extent are the benefits of the projects likely to be sustained after the completion of the project?
	What are the factors behind the lack of sustainability in some elements (or the entire intervention)?
	What mechanism established by the project to operate and maintain facilities created by the project on a continuous basis?

Key lessons learned and recommendations

The evaluation should provide an overview of key lessons and recommendations based on the assessment of project results. The lessons and recommendations should include:

- the main programming factors of success/failures;
- the main programming challenges;
- the main implementation/ administration factors of success/failures;
- the main implementation/ administration challenges;
- the main challenges and ways to address them.

The major lessons and recommendations should come out clearly in the evaluation Executive Summary.

5. Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders of the project include followings;

No.	Institution/ Officials	Role
1.	Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious	Project owner

	and Cultural Affairs	
2.	Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs - Cultural Section	Implementing agency
3.	National Planning Department	Project approval
4.	Department of Project Management and Monitoring	Project Monitoring and progress review
5.	SAARC secretariat	User of the facilities
6.	Ministry of Defence	Contractor - Construction of the centre
7.	Architect	Architectural designing of the centre
8.	Civil Engineers and quantity surveys	Structural design, technical assistance, quality assurance and certification of work.
9.	Procurement committee and TEC	Procurement of goods and services for the project and technical assistance
10.	Local authorities/ Divisional Secretariat	Provide facilities for the centre
11.	Local Community	Potential users of the facilities at the centre

6. Evaluation Methodology

This is a mid-term internal evaluation which can generate robust and actionable insights to inform decision-making, enhance future interventions, and contribute to the broader understanding of effective construction projects. Under this evaluation, desk review, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and field observations are carried out to by the consultant – engineer to inspect the buildings constructed. The evaluation will use a mixed method approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The evaluation will use following data collection methods to

- a) **Desk Review:** Review of all relevant project documentation including project proposal, financial documents, annual work-plans, project progress reports, monitoring reports, field supervision reports and other relevant documents.
- b) **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** 10 KIIs is expected to be conducted with officials of ministry of cultural affairs, national planning department, local government authorities,

SAARC secretariat, ministry of defence, architect, civil engineers and other key stakeholders. The structured questionnaire will be prepared to conduct the KIIs.

- c) **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Three focus group discussions will be conducted with community groups, potential users of the facilities, prospectus institutions who are willing to take over the assets.
- d) **Field Observation:** For the proposed evaluation, site visits would provide a great opportunity to experience the activities carried out, assess the project delivery and infrastructure built. The filed observations provide an important addition to report findings.

7. Management structure of evaluation

Management Group is established for this evaluation purpose to support to oversee the process, quality, timeliness and accuracy of the evaluation and intervene and facilitate to overcome issues faced during the commissioning of the evaluation. A team comprised 05 members of senior management from the Department of Project Management and Monitoring and Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs.

Member of Management Group	Roles and Responsibility	Meetings of Management Group
05 Members from DPMM and MOBRCA	• Determine the structure of the evaluation team. • Design and implementation of the program or project to be evaluation • Determine the supporting tools and documentation. • Provide final approval of all aspects of the evaluation process	Twice a week to oversee the evaluation implementation process
	• Oversees evaluation process and planning • Provide necessary training, knowledge to the evaluation group • Review and provide feedback on evaluation TOR, Inception Report and Questionnaire.	Twice a week
	• Issue guidelines and instruction during the field	When and where

	data collection • Ensure quality standards • Support the evaluation process	necessary – 3 days maximum
	• Provide written or verbal feedback on inception report, draft evaluation report, evaluation finding and recommendations. • Provide necessary recommendations to be included in the evaluation report • Support to resolve matters raised by the evaluation steering committee	When and where necessary – 3 days maximum

8. Scope of work of the evaluation expert

- Oversees the evaluation process and planning
- Conduct the evaluation process with the support of technical facilities when necessary
- Preparation of Inception report, Draft report and final report

09. Deliverables and Payment Terms

The Task should be completed before 24th of December 2025

Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Payment as Percentage
Inception Report	Work plan and methodology together with data collection instruments, guidelines for FGDs and KIIs	1 st Week	10%
Draft Evaluation Report	Complete analysis with findings and recommendations	2 nd Week	30%
Present the Draft Evaluation Report to the Management	Present the final draft evaluation to the Management Committee to validate the findings	3 rd Week	50%

Committee			
Final Evaluation Report	Incorporating stakeholder feedback and issue the final report for ministry approval	4 th Week	100%

The final report shall include:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Evaluation Scope
- Evaluation Methodology
- Limitation to Evaluation
- Findings
- Conclusion and Recommendations
- Lessons Learned
- Annexes