

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT OF GENDER AND NUTRITION BARRIERS, AND DESIGN OF INTERVENTION 'BUNDLE' FOR IMPROVING THE NUTRITION IMPACT OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS IN PAKISTAN

Issued by

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

ABOUT GAIN

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the UN in 2002 to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition. Working with both governments and businesses, we aim to transform food systems so that they deliver more nutritious food for all people.

GAIN's work to improve the consumption of safe and nutritious food is based on three interlinked strategic objectives:

1. to improve the demand for safe, nutritious foods,
2. to increase the availability of nutritious foods and enhance the nutritional value of foods, and
3. to strengthen the enabling environment to improve the consumption of safe, nutritious foods

We build alliances between governments, local and global businesses, and civil society to deliver sustainable improvements at scale. We are part of a global network of partners working together to create sustainable solutions to malnutrition. Through alliances, we provide technical, financial and policy support to key participants in the food system. We use specific learning, evidence of impact, and results of projects and programmes to shape and influence the actions of others.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, GAIN has representative offices in Denmark, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, we have country offices in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania. Programmes and projects are carried out in a variety of other countries, particularly in Africa and Asia.

BACKGROUND

The Social Protection programme at GAIN works across several countries to promote and safeguard accessibility of nutrition-sensitive social protection benefits among the most vulnerable members of the population. The programme takes a distinctly community-oriented and human-centered approach to social protection, placing primary emphasis on leveraging social protection to improve nutrition—especially among women and girls—through empowerment, resilience, and human capital development.

In Pakistan, GAIN's social protection work emphasizes the potential for social protection to enhance vulnerable women's access to and demand for nutritious, safe foods. Under the social protection programme, we are supporting food distribution networks (FDNs) to identify barriers to women's inclusion and to co-develop novel, gender-transformative innovations that can ensure that FDNs are accessible to women and that their offerings are as nutritious as possible. Our work utilizes social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) techniques to promote positive nutrition behaviour change among women and to promote the role of men (constituting the majority of current FDN beneficiaries) as champions of household nutrition.

The project is being implementing this in Lahore and Faisalabad Districts of Punjab, Pakistan. GAIN seeks to appoint a consultant to facilitate a community-based, participatory design process that will drive the co-creation of an effective, contextualised, and sustainable package of nutrition and gender interventions for food distribution networks in the Punjab region.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

GAIN's social protection work in Pakistan is currently concerned with food distribution networks (FDNs), a form of privately administrated social protection supported by charities and philanthropies throughout Pakistan. FDNs typically provide hot, prepared meals or take-home rations free of charge to low-income community members in large kitchens (*dastarkhwan*s), often strategically located in areas where particularly vulnerable people congregate (such as industrial sites with many wage laborers). While these kitchens are fundamentally

open to all, an overwhelming majority of FDN beneficiaries are men, owing to a number of social and cultural factors. It is possible that, if proper support and appropriate accommodations are provided, FDNs could become more comfortable and accessible environments for low-income women, thus having potential impacts on their access to healthy diets and nutrition status.

Moreover, a parallel aim of our work with these FDNs is to make their offerings more nutritious *for all beneficiaries*, regardless of their gender. We aim to do this particularly through supporting FDNs to plan and execute more nutritious menus, and by strengthening sourcing practices for local, nutritious food products. By taking such actions, and improving the nutritive value of FDNs' offerings, the potential for FDNs to drive nutrition gains for vulnerable beneficiaries will be maximized.

TOWARD A COMMUNITY-BASED, PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

GAIN seeks to articulate a bundle of interventions that, together, achieve two objectives: 1) improve the nutritional quality of FDN services, and 2) improve women's utilisation of FDNs' services.

We believe that FDNs themselves, and the beneficiaries they serve, are in the best position to identify the kinds of interventions that will work in their local context. Thus, GAIN envisages that the process of designing and implementing the interventions will be community-based and participatory, involving FDNs and community members at every stage. We envision that these essential stakeholders will be *co-creators* and *co-owners* of the final bundle of interventions, and that their interests and ideas will be solidly reflected.

IMPORTANT: In this activity, we consider “community-based” and “participatory” approaches to be *only* those that involve meaningful co-creation/co-design activities at the local level. Extractive methods like household surveys, focus group discussions, and key-informant interviews, would not be considered “participatory” on their own, because these interactions are often one-directional and not design-oriented (though these methods may be used in combination with other methods). We will strongly prefer approaches that give end-users (FDNs and community members) more liberty to shape the flow of the process and co-create the interventions directly.

SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

1.1. OVERVIEW

GAIN seeks a consultant or firm who will, with the support of GAIN, design and facilitate a community-based, participatory intervention design process with FDNs and beneficiaries/community members in Punjab, Pakistan.

GAIN expects that the successful applicant will have significant experience and expertise in orchestrating participatory design processes in the local (Pakistan) context. We anticipate that the selected team will be able to promptly and rigorously document diverse participants' inputs throughout the design process, taking care to ensure that all relevant perspectives are considered at key decision moments. The selected firm will be tasked with producing a report describing the final, evidence-supported bundle of appropriate gender and nutrition interventions that would subsequently be implemented by the targeted FDNs in Punjab.

1.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this activity include

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Develop a community-based, participatory process to co-design a bundle of gender and nutrition interventions for FDNs in Punjab, Pakistan
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Implement the community-based, participatory co-design process with target FDNs and their beneficiary communities in Punjab, Pakistan
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Develop the final, evidence-based bundle of interventions based on learnings from the co-design process

OBJECTIVE	PARAMETERS
OBJECTIVE 1	<p>The process should be rooted in robust, valid techniques for community-based participatory research, and should leverage human-centred design (HCD) principles where relevant. Emboldening end-users (FDNs and community members/beneficiaries) as equal partners in and co-owners of the process is essential.</p> <p>GAIN's Human-Centered Design Toolkit for Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection may be used to facilitate planning and implementation of the process.</p> <p>Ideally, the final design of the process should be the product of a consultative effort that incorporates various sources of data, input from key stakeholders, and relevant GAIN staff.</p>
OBJECTIVE 2	<p>The process, once designed, should be implemented comprehensively over a period of no more than 6 contiguous months. Activities should be deeply embedded in beneficiary communities, involving repeated interactions and continuous co-creation with diverse members of the target population. It is expected that efforts will be taken to build trust and to facilitate meaningful local co-ownership over the design process and its outputs, including potentially through the appointment of local community-based project leaders or ambassadors.</p> <p>The process should be carried out in ~6 communities (in Lahore and Faisalabad Districts of Punjab) independently of one another.</p>

The process should be rigorously documented from start to finish, and should seek to achieve a set of specific participatory research objectives that should be established *a priori* and approved by GAIN.

NOTE: The consultant must include all anticipated costs of implementing the process (including travel to field sites, accommodations, venues/refreshments, etc.) in the financial proposal. To aide in estimating these costs, applicants are advised to plan for direct community engagement with ~6 FDNs, including 3 in Lahore District and 3 in Faisalabad District.

OBJECTIVE 3

Following the implementation of the community-based participatory intervention design process, the consultant will synthesize all findings to develop the final design of a “bundle” of interventions that, together, aim to accomplish two parallel aims: 1) improved nutritional quality of FDN services, and 2) improved women’s utilisation of FDN services. The bundle of interventions should be thoroughly rooted in, and clearly substantiated by, the results of the community-based design process. The potential efficacy of the proposed interventions must also be backed by various sources of valid evidence, including past studies/trials, survey data, practical experience in local or other contexts, etc.

The process of defining the final intervention bundle should include one multi-stakeholder consultative workshop, wherein at least 10 FDNs would be invited to reflect on the gathered information, synthesize learnings, fill gaps, and participate in decision-making.

NOTE: this consultative workshop may be held in either Lahore OR Faisalabad, but shall include FDNs from both districts. The consultant will be tasked with facilitating the workshop and covering the costs of their team’s travel and accommodations, but GAIN will cover the costs of the workshop venue, catering, and any required supplies/materials.

The final deliverable articulating the design of the bundled interventions should identify an implementation plan (including required set-up actions and resource needs); a risk assessment and potential mitigation steps; and a longer-term sustainability assessment identifying the key considerations for maximising the sustainability of the intervention and its impacts beyond the project’s timeframe.

1.3. DELIVERABLES

Table 5: Scope of Work: Activities and deliverables

Activities	Deliverables
Workplan and Process Design	Approved inception report describing in detail the intervention design process and implementation plan, including scope, locations, and timelines.
Implementation of Community-Based Participatory Intervention Design Process	Satisfactory completion of community-based participatory intervention design activities in accordance with the agreed workplan, and approved implementation report summarising key results from each local process.

Facilitation of multi-stakeholder consultative design workshop	Approved workshop agenda. Satisfactory completion of workshop in accordance with approved agenda. Approved report documenting workshop conclusions and key take-aways, including demonstrable evidence that FDNs and beneficiaries were involved in design decision-making.
Final Intervention (Bundle) Design	Approved report describing in detail the recommended evidence-based bundle of nutrition and gender interventions, including an implementation plan, risk assessment and mitigation steps, and a sustainability assessment.

TENTATIVE PROJECT TIMELINE

The following table details the anticipated project timelines. It is expected that the selected applicants ensure deliverables are submitted in a timely manner at the end of each phase of the project.

		2024								
ACTIVITIES		APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Inception Phase									
	Process Implementation									
	Consultative Workshop									
	Final Design									
			= Preparation				= Execution			

II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING

This section addresses the process for responding to this solicitation. Applicants are encouraged to review this prior to completing their responses.

CONTACT

Staff will be available to respond to clarifications on this solicitation. Please direct all inquiries and other communications to the GAIN email address: rfp@gainhealth.org. Queries sent by May 22nd 2024 at 5:00pm Central European Time will be responded to by May 29th 2024.

BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide an illustrative budget in US Dollars, in a separate document. The final budget will be elaborated as the scope of the assessment is clarified and as part of the contracting process. The budget submitted with this proposal should include (i) justification of overall value for money, (ii) a comprehensive budget justification which should be presented for each category of costs including: personnel, cost of travel, including subsistence allowances, consultants, meeting/workshop, overhead if applicable, and miscellaneous expenses. **All prices/rates quoted must be inclusive of all taxes/VAT as required.**

FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted and attached as two separate documents:

1. **Technical proposal** outlining research objectives and methodological approaches; detailed profiles (qualification, expertise, relevant experience etc.) of the agencies and individuals who will be completing the work including their full names, their expertise and publications in relevant research; and, past experience (previous research conducted over the last five years which are relevant for this evaluation) and references.
2. **Financial proposal** outlining budget accompanied by a budget narrative (as above).

SUBMISSION

Proposals should be in English and submitted in electronic copy to the following e-mail address: rfp@gainhealth.org. Please include **SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTION DESIGN – PAKISTAN** in the subject line. As mentioned, the research partner can apply for either the quantitative, qualitative, or process monitoring components, or all components combined. Please make it clear in the application which components are included in the proposal.

DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted electronically to GAIN **before 5:00 pm Central European Time on June 7th 2024.**

UNACCEPTABLE

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

- Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline at the specified receiving office.
- Proposals received by fax.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

REVISIONS

Proposals may be revised by electronic mail provided such revision(s) are received before the deadline.

ACCEPTANCE

GAIN will not necessarily accept the lowest cost or any of the Proposals submitted. Accordingly, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria and mandatory requirements shall govern.

COMPLETION

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed electronically by a principal or authorising signatory of the lead firm or organisation.

- In case of errors in calculating overall costs, the unit costs will govern.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to understand the requirements and instructions specified by GAIN. In the event that clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to contact GAIN at rfp@gainhealth.org prior to making their submission.
- While GAIN has used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this Request for Proposal (RFP), the information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline. The information is not warranted to be accurate by GAIN. Nothing in this RFP is intended to relieve applicants from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this RFP.
- By responding to this RFP, the applicant confirms its understanding that failing to comply with any of the RFP conditions may result in the disqualification of their submission.

RIGHTS OF REJECTION

GAIN reserves the right to reject any or all submissions or to cancel or withdraw this RFP for any reason and at its sole discretion without incurring any cost or liability for costs or damages incurred by any applicant, including, without limitation, any expenses incurred in the preparation of the submission. The applicant acknowledges and agrees that GAIN will not indemnify the applicant for any costs, expenses, payments or damages directly or indirectly linked to the preparation of the submission.

REFERENCES

GAIN reserves the right, before awarding the Proposal, to require the applicant to submit such evidence of qualifications as it may deem necessary, and will consider evidence concerning the financial, technical and other qualifications and abilities of the applicant.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

After awarding the Proposal and upon written request to GAIN, only the following information will be released:

- Name of the successful applicant.
- The applicant's own individual ranking.

SUMMARY OF DEADLINES

1. Queries to be submitted by: May 22nd 2024
2. Responses will be disseminated individually to inquirers by: May 29th 2024
3. Proposal submission deadline: June 7th 2024
4. Response from GAIN on acceptance or rejection of proposal to be communicated by: June 30th 2024
5. Award of contract: July 1st 2024

III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION

NOTICE OF NON-BINDING SOLICITATION

GAIN reserves the right to reject any and all bids received in response to this solicitation and is in no way bound to accept any proposal. GAIN additionally reserves the right to negotiate the substance of the successful applicants' proposals, as well as the option of accepting partial components of a proposal if deemed appropriate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information provided as part of this solicitation is considered confidential. In the event that any information is inappropriately released, GAIN will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. Proposals, discussions, and all information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential.

RIGHT TO FINAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE PROPOSAL

GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final costs, and the final scope of work of the proposal. GAIN reserves the right to limit or include third parties at GAIN's sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by the Selection Team. The following indicate a list of the significant criteria against which proposals will be assessed. This list is not exhaustive or 100% inclusive and is provided to enhance the applicants' ability to respond with substance.

Applicants are required to submit the following information, conforming to the guidelines given in this section:

- **Technical quality of proposal 50%**
 - Overall understanding of RFP and stated objectives
 - Technical documentation and approach
 - Detail and feasibility of project timeline
- **Team profiles and experience 30%**
 - Team members' qualifications and experience
 - Documentation and relevance of related past engagements
 - Clear articulation of the division of roles and responsibilities amongst team members
- **Budget 20%**
 - Total budget affordability
 - Value for money

As part of the selection process, GAIN reserves the option to request clarifications regarding bids that substantially qualify.

EXPERTISE REQUIRED

- Demonstrable expertise in community-based and participatory methods in Pakistan
- Firm understanding of, and familiarity with, intervention design considerations and processes (especially in the nutrition/social protection domain).

REVIEW PROCESS

The review process will involve a Review Panel with participants selected by GAIN.

LIMITATIONS WITH REGARD TO THIRD PARTIES

GAIN does not represent, warrant, or act as agent for any third party as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not authorize any third party to bind or commit GAIN in any way without GAIN's express written consent.

COMMUNICATION

All communication regarding this solicitation shall be directed to appropriate parties at GAIN. Contacting third parties involved in the RFP, the review panel, or any other party may be considered a conflict of interest and could result in disqualification of the proposal.

FINAL ACCEPTANCE

Award of a Proposal does not imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final terms and conditions including the costs and the scope of work when negotiating the final contract to be agreed between GAIN and the applicant.

VALIDITY PERIOD

The offer of services will remain valid for a period of 60 days after the Proposal closing date. In the event of award, the successful applicant will be expected to enter into a contract subject to GAIN's terms and conditions.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Subject to the terms of the contract to be concluded between GAIN and the applicant, the ownership of the intellectual property related to the scope of work of the contract, including technical information, know-how, processes, copyrights, models, drawings, source code and specifications developed by the applicant in performance of the contract shall vest entirely with GAIN.

SCOPE OF CHANGE

Once the contract is signed, no increase in the liability of GAIN or in the fees to be paid by GAIN for the services resulting from any change, modification or interpretation of the documents will be authorised or paid to the applicant unless such change, modification or interpretation has received the express prior written approval of GAIN.

IV. ANNEXES

