

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A SOCIAL DESIRABILITY BIAS TOOL FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

Issued by
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

1. 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.

At GAIN, we believe that everyone in the world should have access to nutritious and safe food. We work to understand and deliver specific solutions to the daily challenge of food insecurity faced by poor people. By understanding that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model, we develop alliances and build tailored programmes, using a variety of flexible models and approaches.

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 sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

2. BACKGROUND

Social desirability bias represents a critical challenge in research conducted across sub-Saharan Africa, significantly threatening the validity and reliability of research findings. This bias occurs when study participants present themselves or their social context in ways that are socially acceptable but do not fully correspond to reality, leading to systematic misrepresentation of true opinions, thoughts, and behaviors.

Social desirability bias manifests through two distinct mechanisms: self-deception and impression management. Self-deception involves participants genuinely believing inaccurate positive statements about themselves due to inflated self-perception and high self-esteem. In contrast, impression management represents deliberate misrepresentation of truth to create favorable impressions, where participants consciously omit or distort facts that might generate unfavorable perceptions. This distinction is particularly relevant for sub-Saharan African research contexts, as impression management can be more readily addressed through environmental and methodological interventions, while self-deception remains largely uncontrollable.

The most widely used instrument for measuring social desirability bias is the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SDS), originally developed with 33 items for Western populations. While this scale has been adapted by Vu and colleagues (2011) for some sub-Saharan African contexts including Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Uganda, significant limitations persist:

- Initial adaptations revealed that several original scale items referenced cultural phenomena irrelevant to sub-Saharan African contexts. For example, the concept of “telling someone off” could not be translated into many local languages, leading to removal of five statements from the original 33-item scale in sub-Saharan African adaptations.
- Although the MC-SDS demonstrated reliability across sub-Saharan African countries, substantial differences emerged in both reliability levels and social desirability scores among countries,

suggesting that cultural differences in self-disclosure norms and social conformity pressures significantly impact instrument performance.

Several critical gaps exist in approaches to assessing social desirability bias in sub-Saharan African contexts. While the MC-SDS has been translated and adapted for some sub-Saharan African settings, there has been insufficient systematic identification of culturally specific desirable and undesirable behaviours through research, with adaptations primarily focused on removing inappropriate items rather than systematically replacing them with locally relevant content that reflects context-specific and relevant norms and practices. The observed differences in instrument reliability across sub-Saharan African countries highlight cultural variations in social conformity pressures and disclosure patterns that remain poorly understood. Furthermore, methodological approaches beyond scale adaptations, such as conjoint analysis which shows promise for reducing bias through indirect questioning, remain largely underexplored in these contexts, limiting the available toolkit for researchers working in these diverse cultural settings.

The presence of undetected social desirability bias poses significant threats to research validity and evidence-based decision making. When participants alter their responses to align with perceived social expectations, researchers observe systematic underreporting of socially undesirable behaviours. Conversely, participants tend to overreport socially desirable beliefs and behaviours, including purchasing of nutritious foods, adherence to dietary recommendations, or positive community attitudes toward specific interventions. These distortions could create a of baseline conditions and intervention outcomes.

Understanding and controlling for social desirability bias is particularly important for evaluating the effectiveness of demand creation approaches, such as those developed by GAIN. These programs aim to create and sustain desire for nutritious diets through emotionally compelling campaigns, and point-of-purchase interventions. When evaluating such approach, participants may be inclined to report increased consumption of promoted foods to align with campaign messaging. Without proper assessment and control of social desirability bias, external evaluations may not properly estimate intervention effectiveness.

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP) and will be the administrative lead organisation for this RFP.

The purpose of this RFP is to engage services of a Service Provider to conduct a systematic assessment of existing approaches and propose a specific methodology for assessing social desirability bias in sub-Saharan African research contexts.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

The Service Provider is required to conduct the following:

Phase 1: Literature review

Conduct systematic review of existing tools and methods for assessing social desirability bias globally

- Evaluate effectiveness, reliability, and validity of current instruments across different cultural contexts
- Analyse existing adaptations in sub-Saharan African and other low- and middle-income countries
- Assess methodological approaches for detecting and measuring bias across different research designs
- Review methods for reducing social desirability bias and their applicability to sub-Saharan African contexts

Phase 2: Proposed Methodology and Justification

Based on Phase 1 findings, the service provider should propose and justify a specific approach to address social desirability bias in sub-Saharan African contexts. This proposal should specify:

- Whether to develop a new instrument, adapt existing tools, or use alternative methodological approaches
- Detailed rationale for the recommended approach based on evidence from the literature review
- Specific methodology for implementation including cultural adaptation procedures, validation protocols, and testing frameworks
- Implementation plan including timelines, resource requirements, and key milestones

3.1. DELIVERABLES

Milestone	Estimated deliverable date
Contract signature	2 July 2025
Delivery of literature review	20 August 2025
Delivery of research proposal	10 September 2025

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.

1. CONTACT

Please direct all inquiries and other communications to the contact below, subject line 'Social desirability tool query'. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

2. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN with a detailed fee percentage proposal. The final budget amount will have to be approved by the organisation prior to starting the project.

3. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted as follows:

Technical Proposal (max. 5 pages excluding CV)

- Detailed understanding of the project objectives and scope of work
- Proposed methodology for each phase of work with clear timelines (Gantt chart preferred)
- Innovation and added value beyond existing approaches
- Brief CV and qualifications of lead consultant and team members
- Relevant experience in similar projects with specific examples

- Proposed project management structure and communication plan
- Local partnerships and collaboration strategies in sub-Saharan African setting (in case researcher is not based in any of the following countries: Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Benin, Nigeria)

Financial Proposal

- Detailed budget breakdown by phase and activity
- Payment schedule aligned with deliverable milestones

4. SUBMISSION

Originals should be submitted as follows:

One electronic copy containing the documents preferably in MS Word along with all the required information including the fee proposal should reach GAIN at the address mentioned below, subject line 'Social desirability tool':

Email copy:

- rfp@gainhealth.org

5. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to GAIN **before 11 pm Central European Time on 20 June 2025**.

6. 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.

7. REVISIONS

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

8. 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.

9. COMPLETION

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed 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 the responsible person at GAIN under section II. point 1., 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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:

- Understanding of the scope of work:
 - Proposal shall demonstrate a clear understanding of the project objective and deliverables as outlined in Section I.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the technical requirements of this RFP:
 - Providing detailed technical documentation of the proposed strategy.
 - Evidence of experience delivering solutions using the proposed information technology platform.
- The creative and methodological approaches required to implement each of the parts of the scope of work.
- Comprehensiveness of work plan and reasonableness of proposed time frame:
 - Proposal shall include a feasible work plan to ensure successful completion of deliverables.
 - The work plan details how activities will be coordinated.
- Detailed budget and cost-effectiveness of proposed approach:
 - Evidence of cost-effective approaches to undertaking the scope of work within the proposed budget.
 - Proposal shall identify possible challenges and include creative approaches to addressing them.
- Management and personnel plan:
 - The team members working on this project shall have the relevant qualifications and overall experience required to successfully implement the project.
 - Roles and responsibilities of each team member shall be clearly defined. GAIN shall have one main contact person clearly identified in the proposal.
- A duly completed offer of services.

GAIN reserves the right to contact the individuals and contractor(s) in order to verify the information provided as part of the Proposal.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

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

6. 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 authorise any third party to bind or commit GAIN in any way without GAIN's express written consent.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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. OFFER OF SERVICES

1. Offer submitted by:

(Print or type business, corporate name and address)

2. I (We) the undersigned hereby offer to GAIN, to furnish all necessary expertise, supervision, materials, and other things necessary to complete to the entire satisfaction of the Executive Director or authorised representative, the work as described in the Request for Proposal according to the terms and conditions of GAIN for the following prices:
 - a. Click or tap here to enter text.
 - b. Click or tap here to enter text.
 - c. Click or tap here to enter text.

- d. Click or tap here to enter text.
3. I (We) agree that the Offer of Services will remain valid for a period of sixty days (60) calendar days after the date of its receipt by GAIN.
4. I (We) herewith submit the following:
- (a) A Proposal to undertake the work, in accordance with GAIN's requirements specified.
- (b) A duly completed offer of services, subject to the terms herein.

OFFERS WHICH DO NOT CONTAIN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED DOCUMENTATION OR DEVIATE FROM THE PRESCRIBED COSTING FORMAT MAY BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE AND NON-RESPONSIVE.

Date this day of Click or tap here to enter text. in Click or tap here to enter text.

_____ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)

_____ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)