REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CONSULTANT — SCOPING STUDY FOR INTRODUCING DIGITIZATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QUALITY MONITORING OF FORTIFIED FOOD PRODUCTS IN ETHIOPIA

Issued by
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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.

2. BACKGROUND

Despite progress, malnutrition continues to be a global challenge. It not only results in short-and long-term health problems at the individual level, but also has a detrimental impact on productivity resulting in negative socioeconomic consequences for countries at large. As a global community, we are working hard towards reaching the ambitious Sustainable Development Goal of ending all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people—especially children—have sufficient and nutritious food all year. Meeting this goal requires that nutritious foods are made available and accessible, particularly to vulnerable populations. Our current efforts must be enhanced and scaled up.

Micronutrient malnutrition, commonly in the form of iron, iodine, vitamin A, zinc, and folate deficiencies affect nearly half of children worldwide younger than 5 years of age and approximately one-third of the world's population. Large scale food fortification (LSFF) programs (one intervention within the micronutrient “toolbox” of options) has been shown to significantly improve nutrition, health, and development outcomes; a recent systematic review found that LSFF improved the micronutrient status and health outcomes of populations in low- and middle-income countries. These included reduction of birth defects, improvements in iron status, improvements in vitamin A status, among others.

One major pitfall in the case of fortification to health impact is that even when a country has made fortification mandatory, gaps in fortification quality remain. Fortified foods that do not meet the established standards can result in a program not reaching its intended impact. In order to understand where these pitfalls lie in achieving adequate quality of fortified foods and to initiate corrective actions, data collection throughout various points of the food fortification value chain i.e., from producer to consumer are needed. Despite collection of data among various stakeholder across the value chain, data is not shared and is kept in silos. How can we improve and integrate current technologies and create new technologies into one, robust and comprehensive cross sector data system for fortification quality?
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is leading a consortium of expert technology partners, private sector, and NGOs to pilot and scale up a Digital System for Food Fortification which intends to improve transparency and traceability of fortification quality across the large-scale food fortification value chain, (here forth referred to as the “Digital Fortification Quality Traceability System”). This software solution is capable of tracking quality from the premix producer to the fortified edible oil producer and to the food product via capturing the critical tracking of “events” along the value chain (i.e., Shipping-Receiving-Transformation-Analysis). Dashboards for producers and government entities make the recorded information visible (i.e., vitamin A fortification of edible oil). The long term vision for this Global Good is to enable regular and efficient data collection and reporting on fortification, that has local and global buy in, to drive better decision making and improved programming and can be adapted to different contexts and value chains.

3. OBJECTIVES

Overall purpose

A first iteration of the system has been developed and is being piloted in three countries: Bangladesh, India, and Nigeria. In each country, the context for the system varies (in particular, the enabling environment including existing digital systems used by private sector and government, champions, existing processes for data collection on quality of fortified foods by government monitoring agencies, government, and other stakeholders, among others). In parallel to the piloting in three countries, we would like to assess the landscape in Ethiopia for the future piloting of Digital Fortification Quality Traceability System.

In Ethiopia, salt iodization has been mandatory since 2009 and monitored by the authorities since. In June 2022, The Ethiopian Standard Council endorsed the mandatory fortification of edible oil and wheat flour, therefore, these staples have only very recently become subject to regulatory enforcement.

GAIN is seeking a consultant to carry out a scoping study to understand the landscape of existing digital systems, existing and forthcoming digital transformation efforts, and understand potential facilitators and barriers to implementation. The aim is to assess the feasibility of deployment of the digital traceability system and other digital tools to monitor food fortification, i.e., introducing digitization of internal and external quality monitoring of fortified products (oil and wheat).

SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant will:

- Carry out a scoping study/landscape assessment of digital platforms used by relevant stakeholders (e.g., government and producers) in Ethiopia (including relevant sectors such as food safety, agriculture, national laboratories, other management information systems, electronic registration systems. This includes but not limited to:
  - Review the existing electronic registration system of and Ethiopia Food and Drug Authority (EFDA)
  - Explore potential of introducing digitization support at the Food & Beverage Industry Research and Development Center (FBIRDC)
  - Explore potential of linking the EPHI system to Digital QA/QC system for integration of future quality monitoring through market surveillance when fortification becomes mandatory.
  - Identify and outline relevant protocols or processes (not necessarily digital processes) in place for tracking fortification, if any, as well as any data collection by relevant stakeholders.
- Identify critical stakeholders (government, private sector, NGOs, digital transformation champions, Community-based organizations, advocacy, legal, IT, etc.) to engage with for implementation of digital tools, e.g., Digital Fortification Quality Traceability system
Stakeholder mapping and analysis
- An exhaustive list with stakeholder name, address, contact. For the local producers identify annual production volume or capacity (to estimate volume shares and to categorize size of producers).
- Recommend and advise on potential platforms to engage with for the Digital QAQC project
  - Develop a final report on the feasibility of deployment of the digital traceability system and other digital tools to monitor food fortification
  - Advise on the implementation strategy, identify key stakeholders and partners to engage with, potential risks/barriers.
  - Potential hosting of Digital Fortification Traceability Quality system and service providers for maintenance and long-term sustainability post-donor funding.

Additional responsibilities may include:
- Work with country lead and stakeholders to document barriers and potential anxieties/concerns of various participants in the system
- Participate in cross country online workshops on knowledge/lessons sharing from the three pilot countries
- Coordinate efforts with other specialists, including the Digital Fortification Quality Traceability System consortium
- Track and report issues/risks

EXPECTED EXPERTISE

The consultant must have demonstrated experience undertaking similar work and should have substantial prior experience in scoping studies and landscaping assessments in projects.

The Consultant should have the following skills and qualifications:
- Experience and knowledge of Large-Scale Food Fortification or nutrition interventions broadly, understanding of food industry and government agencies in Ethiopia
- Experience working on landscape assessments/scoping studies
- Experience and knowledgeable on digitization, digital tools, online management information systems
- Knowledge and experience carrying out stakeholder mapping and analyses
- Flexibility working with different time zones
- Willingness to travel to Ethiopia if needed
- Exceptional communication skills, both written and verbal
- Excellent active listening skills
- Ability to clearly articulate messages to a variety of audiences-technical and nontechnical
- Ability to establish and maintain strong relationships
- Ability to influence others and move toward a common vision or goal

Experience
- Relevant experience in subject matter
- Experience working with low- and middle-income countries (preferred)
- Experience working with International Organizations (preferred), including knowledge of government and food industry in Ethiopia

Other requirements
- Fluent in English
**DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE**

The timeline for completion of all aspects of the Scope of Work and submission of deliverables is outlined in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DELIVERABLE</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission of expression of interest</td>
<td>December 24, 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contract signing</td>
<td>December 27, 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meetings with GAIN teams</td>
<td>January 8, 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol submitted</td>
<td>January 15, 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Draft submitted</td>
<td>March 14, 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report and communicate scoping study</td>
<td>March 27, 2024</td>
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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

Key programme and technical staff from GAIN are part of the selection team of the organisation and will review the proposals. They will be available via email to respond to clarifications on this solicitation. Please direct all inquiries and other communications to rfp@gainhealth.org. 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 proposal in US Dollars, including daily rate. The final fee will have to be approved by GAIN prior to starting the project.

3. SUBMISSION

Interested applicants should prepare a proposal that consists of the following:

1. a three-paragraph expression of interest including: reasons for interest in the consultancy, qualifications in change management; daily rate
2. a brief (<3 pages) CV highlighting recent relevant experience and references; and

4. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to rfp@gainhealth.org by 5:00 pm EST on 24, December, 2023.

5. UNACCEPTABLE

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:
Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline.
Proposals received by fax or post.
Incomplete proposals.
Proposals that are not signed.

6. REVISIONS

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

7. 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.
8. 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 GAIN at rfp@gainhealth.org prior to making their submission before the deadline specified in the timeline above.

While GAIN have used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 reserve 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:
Past experience undertaking similar work;
Rate.

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.