

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RESEARCH PARTNER: QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF NUTRITION-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS IN INDIA

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 India, GAIN's social protection work heavily focuses on improving women's livelihoods, capitalising on GAIN's significant expertise working with food fortification, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and public-sector social assistance schemes. In the state of Bihar, we are working to bolster linkages between women's nutrition enterprises and the social protection system by giving targeted capacity-building and livelihoods support to women's self-help groups (SHGs) engaged in the production of micronutrient fortified commodities that are publicly procured and disseminated to vulnerable women and children through the social protection system. Thus, the programme has two parallel aims: 1) promote sustained livelihood gains among women SHG members and their communities, and 2) bolster the scale and sustainability of distribution of locally-produced nutritious foods to vulnerable beneficiaries through the social protection system. The project's high-level theory of change is summarized in the **ANNEXES**.

GAIN and a consortium of India-based partners will implement the programme in the field. The success of the programme will be evaluated using mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) impact evaluation of key indicators at baseline and endline, complemented by periodic process and performance monitoring and a learning workshop at the project's midpoint to inform needs for course-correction.

TENTATIVE PROJECT TIMELINE

The following table details the tentative project timelines. Timelines for the respective activities may shift somewhat in accordance with conditions in the field. It is expected that the selected applicants ensure deliverables are submitted in a timely manner at the end of each data collection activity.

Table 1: Project timelines

			2023	2024				2025				2026		
ACTIVITIES			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Quantitative	Baseline												
		Endline												
	Qualitative	Baseline												
		Endline												
Process Monitoring														
Learning Workshop														

SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

1.1. OVERVIEW

GAIN seeks a consultant or research agency who will work closely with GAIN and our implementing partners to assess the impact of our India social protection programme **against Key Performance Indicators**, including both quantitative and qualitative indicators through an impact evaluation. The consultant will also, ideally, manage and implement collection of perioding process and performance monitoring data.

Applicants are invited to submit proposals for the impact evaluation and periodic monitoring components together or individually, but **GAIN will give preference to applicants who are able to undertake both components.**

The selected applicant(s) will work in close collaboration with GAIN's global Social Protection Programme Lead, GAIN India's Social Protection team, and the project's focal person from GAIN's Knowledge Leadership Unit to design and implement the impact evaluation and process monitoring activities. It is expected that the research partner would **facilitate formal, robust trainings to all enumerators**/field data collectors engaged in the studies. GAIN acknowledges that qualitative research requires very specific skills and competencies, so

we expect that persons conducting qualitative research will have demonstrable experience and familiarity with such methods.

GAIN expects that the successful applicant will manage data in compliance with GAIN's data management systems and platforms; GAIN staff will provide orientation on these systems and expectations to the research partner during on-boarding.

1.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Provide objective, unbiased feedback to the programme on key indicators and measurement approaches including the elaboration of a programme impact pathway
- Develop and test data collection tools, quality assurance protocols, and data management systems for the included studies
- Coordinate attainment of and compliance with requisite ethics approvals for all included studies from relevant institutional review boards (IRB) and to obtain Health Ministry Screening Committee (HMSC) approval from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR); experience with such procedures is a necessity
- Execute primary data collection, processing, and quality assurance protocols for the included studies in accordance with GAIN's specifications
- Organise and facilitate a learning workshop at the project's midpoint
- Support with initial analysis of summary statistics (quantitative data) and thematic analysis (qualitative data) at baseline and endline
- Advise GAIN on any risks, opportunities, and course-correction needs based on emerging trends in the data
- Co-lead, as needed, in disseminating research findings to partners, donors, and/or other stakeholder groups

1.3. IMPACT DOMAINS FOR EVALUATION

The project will examine impacts in three domains, which are considered equally vital and integral for the success of the programme: 1) livelihood gains for vulnerable women, 2) expanded provision of highly nutritious foods via the social protection system, and 3) improved business practices in SHGs. Indicative indicators in each of the three domains are summarised in the table below (final key indicators will be determined upon on-boarding the research partner).

Table 2: Impact evaluation domains.

Impact Domain	Indicative Indicators
Livelihood Gains for Vulnerable Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improvement in SHG members' skills and capacities ● Improvement in SHG members' agency and perceived self-efficacy ● Improvement in amount and/or stability of household income ● Improvement in social cohesion and mutual support among SHG members and the wider community ● Improvement in SHG members' nutritional empowerment (e.g. WENI, or similar metrics) ● Improvement in SHG members' own dietary quality (or that of their households)

Expanded Provision of Highly Nutritious Foods via the Social Protection System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater volume of production of nutritious foods by SHG production units • Greater/more consistent public procurement of nutritious foods by social protection systems • Improved nutritional value/quality of products distributed through the social protection system • Improved uptake and consumption of nutritious foods by vulnerable social protection beneficiaries
Improved Business Practices in SHGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in business operations and revenue • Improvement in business sustainability and autonomous functioning • Greater diversification of product range and markets • Improvement in business foresight, planning, and leadership

1.4. PROCESS MONITORING DOMAINS

At four time points, the research partner will perform a thorough process monitoring exercise to assess the quality of programme delivery. The process monitoring indicators (to be refined in collaboration with the research partner) will encompass the following domains, adapted from the OECD-DAC criteria:

Table 4: Process monitoring domains

Monitoring Domain	Description
Efficiency	The extent to which the project delivers (or is expected to deliver) results in an economic and timely way
Effectiveness	The extent to which the project is expected to achieve its objectives, including differential results across SHG-run production units
Relevance	The extent to which key stakeholders (e.g. those mentioned above) view the project as <i>positive</i> or <i>meaningful</i>
Equity	The extent to which the project equitably reaches (and is likely to impact) those who stand to gain the most (e.g. particularly disadvantaged groups; nutritionally vulnerable households; women)
Sustainability	Toward a vision of longer-term operation beyond the project timeframe, the extent to which the project's present operations have the potential to be sustained beyond GAIN's direct involvement

1.5. DELIVERABLES

Table 5: Scope of Work: Activities and deliverables

Activities	Deliverables
Develop a detailed comprehensive workplan for the scope of work & setup data management system infrastructure	Final detailed protocols, work plan, budget, and timelines; technical brief on data management system infrastructure

Consultation on Key Indicators and measurement approach	Consultative workshop (virtual/hybrid format) with global and India-based GAIN staff & corresponding report (with key recommendations) and development of a programme impact pathway
Liaise with GAIN to develop the survey tools ideally using digital data entry, as well as the sampling frame and size calculations	Final data collection tools
Lead the submission process to relevant Institutional Review Board(s) for ethical clearance, for above research activities as needed	Institutional Review Board approval letters, including HMSC approval
Conduct Mixed-Methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) Baseline Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full and final datasets in format(s) compliant with GAIN's data management standards, (including interview transcripts in local language and English) • Quality assurance report and justification for any gaps • Summary statistics for each quantitative indicator • High-level thematic analysis of qualitative results (articulate critical gaps and opportunities, supported by direct quotations)
Conduct Mid-Point Learning Workshop Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop plan and agenda approved • Workshop successfully conducted • Workshop synthesis report and recommendations approved
Conduct Mixed-Methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) Endline Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full and final datasets in format(s) compliant with GAIN's data management standards, (including interview transcripts in local language and English) • Quality assurance report and justification for any gaps • Summary statistics for each quantitative indicator • High-level thematic analysis of qualitative results (articulate critical gaps and opportunities, supported by direct quotations)
Conduct Periodic Process & Performance Monitoring (four monitoring time points; refer to timeline above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full and final datasets (at each time point) in format(s) compliant with GAIN's data management standards • Quality assurance reports (at each time point) and justification for any gaps
Final report and datasets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed final report on studies conducted, methodologies used, data quality, and critical reflections on the research process • Detailed final report on key findings for each key indicator, noting the amount of change from baseline (including statistical tests where applicable). All qualitative findings should be supported by direct quotations when possible • Full and final cleaned datasets submitted and approved by GAIN

Co-lead, as needed, the dissemination of results in selected meetings

- Participation in global and India-based workshops/stakeholder meetings to share endline survey results, including support with PowerPoint presentation(s) highlighting key findings

1.6. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

PROJECT GEOGRAPHY

The project is currently serving five women-led SHGs, which are operating in three districts of the state of Bihar: Gaya, Muzaffarpur, and Khagaria.

IMPACT EVALUATION

GAIN expects both the quantitative and qualitative arms of the impact evaluation to be academically rigorous, and statistically robust where possible. The quantitative impact evaluation will utilize a baseline-endline comparison design and aims to have balanced sampling efforts across SHGs and districts. There are currently no plans for a control (non-intervention) SHG group. The primary unit of analysis will be the SHGs; secondary units of analysis may include district-level or individual-level analyses.

The qualitative evaluation should leverage methodologies such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and ethnographic observations. Evaluations including participatory research approaches are preferable and will be encouraged.

Impact evaluation data should be collected primarily from SHG members and social protection system beneficiaries, potentially with some input from other members of the target communities and market system actors.

PROCESS MONITORING

If possible, to maximize impartiality of monitors, the process monitoring component of the project should be undertaken by team members who are not directly involved in the design and implementation of the impact evaluation component.

Process monitoring will take place on a biannual (twice per year) basis over the course of the project's implementation phase. GAIN expects process monitoring to be conducted routinely in all three districts and across all five SHGs. Process monitoring indicators will utilize both quantitative and qualitative measures, but these indicators will not overlap with those of the impact evaluation. Care should be taken such that the process monitoring exercise does not introduce bias into the study or in any way influence or "contaminate" the intervention.

Process monitoring data should be collected primarily from GAIN staff, our implementing partners, and through direct observation of practices and operations at the field-level. Limited direct interaction with SHG members and social protection beneficiaries may be needed for select monitoring indicators.

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 December 12th 2023 at 5:00pm IST will be responded to by December 18th 2023.

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. **Project overview slide deck (8-12 slides)** articulating the consultant's vision for the project and highlighting relevant experiences and competencies of the team (if needed, shortlisted applicants may be asked to present their slide deck to GAIN staff)
2. **Technical proposal** outlining specific objectives, proposed workplans, 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.
3. **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 EVALUATION & MONITORING – INDIA** 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 December 22nd 2023**.

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: December 12th 2023
2. Response will be disseminated by: December 18th 2023
3. Proposal submission deadline: December 22nd 2023
4. Final response from GAIN on selection of Service Provider: January 10th 2024
5. Contracting process initiated: January 20th 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%**
 - Clear articulation of methods to meet stated research objectives
 - Fit of chosen methods and research design to meet stated objectives
 - Limitations of methodological approaches taken
- Team profiles and experience **30%**
 - Experience working in relevant topical areas
 - Organisational capacity to conduct research outlined in RFP
 - Organisational capacity to serve as a research partner to GAIN throughout the course of project implementation
 - Demonstrated ability to produce work in a timely fashion
 - Experience working in India is essential (and if proposing to work in a setting where organization has no experience, a local research partner must be identified)
- Budget **20%**
 - Total budget
 - Value for money

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

EXPERTISE REQUIRED

- Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies
- Conducting evaluations and research in low-income country settings. Experience conducting research in India is essential. The research partner must have research staff or sub-contractors based in the focal country (India).

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 authorise 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

THEORY OF CHANGE



