

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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# CONSULTANT – SCOPING REVIEW OF GENDER AND DIGITIZATION IN LARGE-SCALE FOOD FORTIFICATION

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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 Africa and Asia.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

GAIN is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) and will be the administrative lead organisation for this RFP.

The purpose of this RFP is to engage services of a Consultant to design and conduct a scoping review of gender equity efforts in LSFF, with particular focus on the digitization, as part of GAIN's work on digitizing fortification quality and strengthening enabling environments.

#### **2.1. DIGITIZING FORTIFICATION QUALITY AND STRENGTHENING ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS**

Large-scale food fortification (LSFF) programs today suffer from a lack of fortification quality across almost all food vehicles due to weak government enforcement mechanisms that are a result of poor incentives, lack of trained personnel, and limited resources. Without the enforcement that could level the playing field, mills/refiners are not held accountable to fortify to government standards - and many do not fortify at all, reducing effective coverage and diminishing the contribution fortification can have on micronutrient intakes and disease prevention. To date, quality improvements in fortification have largely been achieved through accreditation services (i.e., premix) and traditional capacity building of industry, labs, and government regulators by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These efforts have been important, but they have failed to build sustainable, cost-effective systems, as they continue to rely heavily on resource-constrained government enforcement programs for monitoring and on international donors to support the work of the NGOs.

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), GAIN aims to lead a digital quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) project, which consists of the co-creation, design, test and scale up with

partners of a digital, country-owned, field-friendly, replicable solution that enables mills and regulators to produce and access traceable data on food fortification quality while also supporting data quality, knowledge management, technical assistance, and standards for LSFF.

This will include developing and piloting a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for digital QA/QC, pilot tested in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria. It will be co-designed and adapted with local and global partners to ensure ownership, uptake, and sustainability. The product will be designed and aligned with partners to be ready to serve as a global standard for LSFF quality data reporting and according to country replication and uptake.

## **2.2. WOMEN-LED DIGITIZATION**

According to the World Pulse Report, the gender disparities in the use of digital tools are staggering: *“nearly half of the world’s women are still offline and according to the World Economic Forum, women have 23% less access to the internet than men—30–50% less in some countries—and the skills gap is only worsening.”* As digitization spreads throughout the developing world, women are likely to be left behind – women are unable to use digital tools and they fall behind when it comes to their independence, decision-making authority, and chances of acquiring jobs in the future—particularly jobs in leadership or management positions, i.e., higher income jobs, in which women already represent the minority. This will likely worsen the gender gap when it comes to income. Empowering women with access to digital technologies can also allow women to participate and raise their voices, enhance their skills, gain opportunities, create more connections, access resources, and better lead within and among their own community.

## **2.3. GENDER EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE MEASUREMENT IN FORTIFICATION PROGRAMS**

LSFF programs have largely been gender-blind. There are a number of gender inequities related to LSFF and its intended outcome of reducing the burden of micronutrient deficiencies. At the industry-level, there are gendered constraints to participation across the LSFF value chain. For instance, women’s participation in the fortification industry is affected in different ways as they face multiple barriers compared to men due to lower financial, physical, and social capital as well as limited mobility and time (double burden of work). Women generally have lower ownership and access to finance in formal enterprises compared to men. While more informal roles, such as post-harvest handling, food processing and vending, are often held by women, men still take on transportation and formal retail roles, which is likely due in part to patriarchal systems and continued under-investment in women. Historically, women also have lower access to education and technology (e.g., mobile phones) or better production technologies, which can lead to poor technology and/or business-relevant literacy. Increased responsibilities at home, coupled with the lack of maternity benefits and limited mobility (e.g., due to safety/security concerns), make it harder for women to devote equal amounts of time for work outside the home compared to men. At the program design level, LSFF programs are population-based and therefore cannot address the nutrient needs of specific vulnerable population groups, such as women of reproductive age, who often have increased needs for micronutrients at certain life stages (e.g., during pregnancy and lactation). This is because LSFF programs typically base the amounts of added nutrients in fortified foods based on the needs of adult men (who are likely to have higher intakes of any certain food).

Despite these inequities, there is limited consolidation of evidence on gender issues in LSFF and how to integrate inclusive measurement in LSFF (i.e., gender-sensitive metrics). More evidence is required to understand participation in and capacity to benefit from LSFF by gender and how explicitly targeting women in certain aspects of program design and delivery could improve expected outcomes.

## 2.4. INTEGRATING GENDER EQUITY INTO THE DIGITAL QA/QC PROJECT

Under the digital QA/QC project, GAIN is committed to being intentional about gender equitable LSFF programming across the continuum from design through implementation and measurement. GAIN will aim to ensure that no gender-based barriers to the new technology are inadvertently created, and instead will encourage more women's involvement in this work. The new technology and its user experience will be tailored to consider gender so that there are no barriers in its use. Capacity building of women to access and use digital tools as part of their daily work, and to train others, can make the MVP for digital QA/QC more inclusive and more amenable to current contexts in which women are faced (e.g., increased childcare duties now and due to COVID, staying at home due to cultural and other factors, etc.). Additionally, where possible, GAIN will include gender intentional considerations related to women's roles in the LSFF value chain from millers to regulatory authorities, in digitization, in implementation research and sex disaggregated data from situation analyses and project assessments, and in considerations around unintended harmful consequences. Gender considerations will also inform the selection of mills at the country level for the pilot and scale-up.

During the planning phase of the project, GAIN aims to develop guidance on gender-sensitive fortification programming and identify gender-sensitive metrics that can be incorporated into the digital QA/QC project implementation plans in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to undertake a scoping review that will present global learnings to date and consolidate specific knowledge related to the following **research questions**:

- What gender considerations are required during design, implementation, and evaluation of LSFF programs?
- What gender-sensitive metrics can/should be integrated into LSFF programs throughout the program life cycle?
- What strategies can be deployed to ensure gender equity in business and technology across the LSFF value chain?
- What strategies can be deployed to address systemic barriers to women's participation in and capacity to benefit from digitization of LSFF?

The review must use transparent and reproducible methods in line with best practices for scoping reviews.

The results of this review will be a key input into the development of a guidance document on gender-sensitive fortification programming, including specific gender-sensitive metrics for incorporation into the digital QA/QC project implementation plans, as well as general guidance for GAIN's LSFF programming. The results are also expected to generate high-quality evidence that will result in at least one manuscript to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

## 4. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

### 4.1. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant shall provide the following services:

- Work with GAIN to finalize the research questions to be answered by the review.
- Lead the development of a review protocol (search terms, databases, etc.), and finalize based on input from GAIN.
- Register the review with an appropriate registry (if deemed necessary).

- Undertake keyword searches in relevant databases and search the websites of relevant organizations (e.g., FAO, the CGIAR centers) to identify relevant documents, clearly documenting the search methods.
- Screen all identified documents for inclusion using defined inclusion/exclusion criteria, clearly documenting reasons for exclusion.
- Review the full text of all relevant documents and extract relevant information using a standardized template.
- Regularly update GAIN on the progress of the review, including discussing initial results and using those to adapt strategies if necessary.
- Document all steps of the review process.
- Compile a PRISMA flow diagram detailing the number of records identified, included and excluded, and the reasons for exclusions.
- Develop an outline for the final manuscript, for GAIN review and approval.
- Draft a full manuscript on the review, including methods, data collection activities, results (aligned to the research questions stated above), and conclusions/recommendations
- Revise and finalize manuscript based on GAIN input.
- Review and provide inputs into the guidance documents being prepared by GAIN.

GAIN expects that the output of this review will be a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, with the consultant as lead or co-author.

#### 4.2. EXPECTED EXPERTISE

The consultant must have demonstrated experience undertaking similar work and should have substantial prior experience conducting scoping and/or systematic reviews. S/he should have strong knowledge of at least one of the following: research methodologies (necessary), nutrition, gender, and/or food fortification (preferred). S/he should be fluent in English.

#### 4.3. 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:

DELIVERABLE	DEADLINE
Submission of proposals	30 May 2022
Contracting finalized	10 June 2022
Review protocol finalized	17 June 2022
Outline of manuscript	24 June 2022
Draft manuscript	8 July 2022
Final manuscript and inputs into guidance documents prepared by GAIN	31 July 2022

## 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](mailto: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 the number of days of work projected and the 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 task, qualifications conducting scoping and/or systematic reviews, and estimated days and daily rate;
2. a brief (<3 pages) CV highlighting recent relevant experience and references; and
3. a relevant writing sample (from similar work).

### 4. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) by **5:00 pm EST on 30 May 2022**.

### 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](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) prior to making their submission before the deadline specified in the timeline above.
- While GAIN has 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.