REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH TO IMPROVE FORTIFICATION QUALITY IN INDIA, NIGERIA, AND BANGLADESH

Issued by

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK	2
II.	INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING	7
III.	TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION	9
IV.	OFFER OF SERVICES	11

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

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (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 Service Provider to design and conduct implementation research activities to test and refine the digitization theory of change, with particular focus on the digitization and gender equity efforts, in Bangladesh, Nigeria and India as part of GAIN’s work on digitizing fortification quality and strengthening enabling environments.

2.1. DIGITIZING FORTIFICATION QUALITY AND STRENGTHENING ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

Fortification 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 the co-creation, design, test and scale up with partners of a digital, 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 large-scale food fortification (LSFF).

The vision of this partnership is developing a country-owned digital, field-friendly systems solution that enables mills and authorities to generate, govern, share, and utilize safely accurate and traceable data on food fortification quality within factories and markets, including customs.

This includes designing and systemically utilizing semi-quantitative and digital quality assessment tools (iCheck Connect) for institutions and authorities mandated to monitor micronutrient fortified foods owned at country level. Sustainable credible self-monitoring by factories will need to be based on a business case and market framework demanding and rewarding quality compliance, including, seizing the opportunity supportive digital consumer information collaboratively with mills and other relevant stakeholders.

GAIN will work in a co-creative fashion with a global IT developer and service provider, premix manufacturers and other selected partners to develop and pilot a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) digital quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) system for oil mills as a start - but with a view to creating a global standard for QA/QC compliance systems, replicable and globally connected in context of a broader, deepening LSFF-specific piece adding on to the existing nutrition data system and community.

The digital QA/QC system will include scoping with and for premixers, mills and regulators to ultimately cost-effectively and systemically assess fortification quality at factory, market, and customs level, including software to capture data, verify trustworthiness, store, to ultimately create a data driven quality framing for mandated fortified foods. This will include a governance model to allow safe, reliable, and accurate data and creates a sustainable co-owned partnership between private and public sector actors in a quality- and compliance-demanding market framework to be built in collaboration with GAIN/BMGF LSFF partners.

The product will be pilot tested in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria and 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.

Global goods will include:

- co-created digital QA/QC system works in 3 countries,
- digital QA/QC system is good to replicate,
- digital QA/QC system is part of new global data architecture within Micronutrient Forum facilitated Data Alliance, and
- managing the complexities of geographic replicability with a cross-sectoral co-owned scale-up strategy (incl. e.g., UNICEF, WFP, Micronutrient Form), BMGF partners (Accenture, BioAnalyt/Sanku, premixers) and governments.

There are three separate phases to the development of the digital QA/QC data system in each country:

- *Planning*: Based on a previous scoping exercise via the BMGF and the partners involved, a series of immediate next steps were identified before piloting the system, including country consultations to ensure buy-in/acceptance, data flow mapping and device/data integration in a “computer lab” setting.
- *Pilot*: Implementation and testing of MVP in 3 mills, in Bangladesh, Nigeria and India; testing devices and system with external monitoring agencies and working with decision makers to test and further development of Digital QA/QC; ongoing monitoring of project and implementation research.
- *Scale up*: Roll out of MVP in 15-20 mills, in Bangladesh, Nigeria and India (20-40 mills).

Where possible, GAIN will include gender intentional considerations relating to women's role in the LSFF value chain from millers to regulatory authorities, in digitization, in implementation research and sex disaggregated data in situation analyses and project assessments, and in considerations around unintended harmful consequences. Gender considerations should also inform the selection of mills at the country level for the pilot and scale-up.

2.2. IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH

There are two fundamental reasons why programs may have little or no impact. First, theory failure where the causal pathway of the problem was poorly, or incompletely, understood when the program was designed such that the program could not address the primary cause of the problem. Second is implementation failure, where the interventions are not implemented as designed (poor fidelity of implementation) or are not accepted, understood, or applied by participants (poor uptake). Monitoring systems are well placed to track fidelity of implementation, but not to test and validate program theories (theories of change) and assure value for money – for which implementation research is better suited. This is more pertinent for innovations like the digital QA/QC system that have potential and can plausibly drive change but are untested.

As part of the digital QA/QC project, implementation research will be designed to track the process of intervention delivery, identify bottlenecks, and test and compare delivery related approaches in order to drive program implementation and inform learning for scale up to additional mills and for application elsewhere. When conducted alongside the delivery phase of a program, it can be used to monitor and strengthen intervention delivery and facilitate course-correction when fidelity of implementation is sub-optimal and thereby enhance potential for impact.

Implementation research and use of findings for refinement throughout the project phases (Figure 1):

- During planning, baseline data will be collected to assess the current situation before the project.
- During pilot (years 1-2), data will be collected to monitor implementation progress and change effectiveness of the pilot and will be used to analyse the project and inform when scale up can occur.
- During scale up (years 3-4), data will be collected to monitor implementation progress and change effectiveness alongside additional market assessments that aim to validate the fortification quality data coming out of the digital QA/QC system.

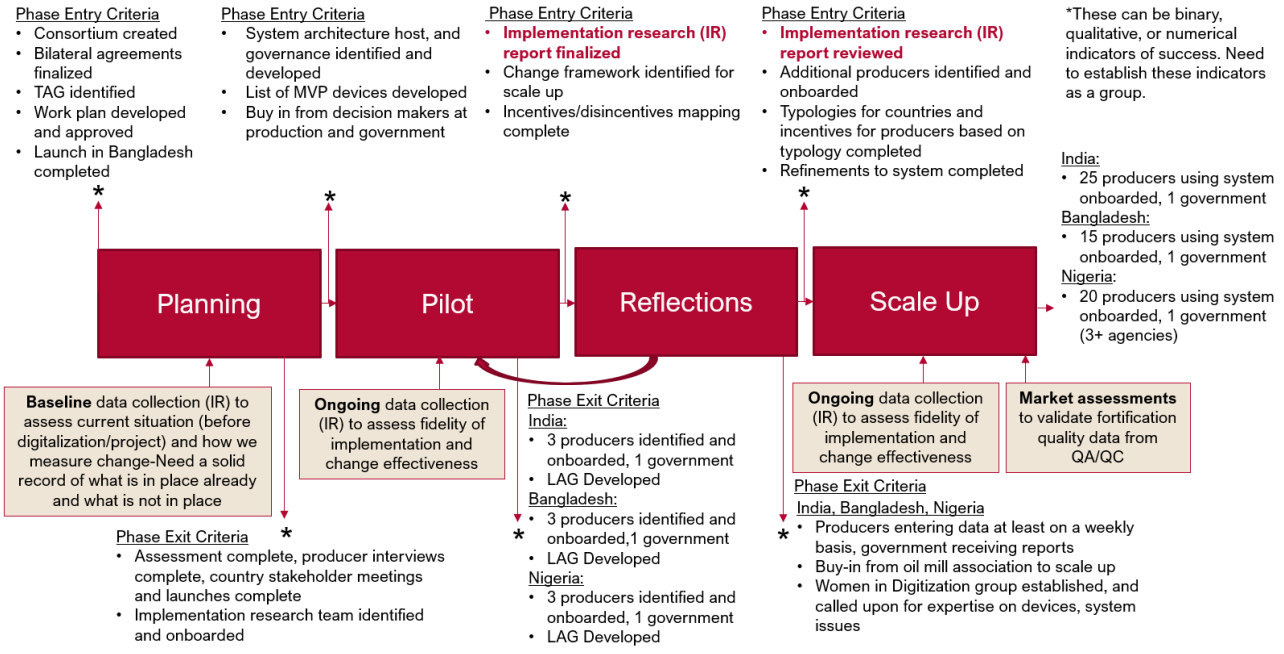


Figure 1. Implementation research (IR) data collection points aligned to digital QA/QC entry and exit phases

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

3.1. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to design and conduct implementation research activities in Bangladesh, Nigeria and India to test and refine the digital QA/QC project theory of change during the planning and pilot phases, with particular focus on the digitization and gender equity efforts. This includes assessment of the current status (at baseline) and changes (up to the end of the pilot phase) regarding the cycle of food quality improvement:

The specific objectives are to:

1. At baseline:
    a. conduct a literature review and design implementation research methods to be carried out in each country;
    b. develop a detailed program impact pathway (PIP) that illustrates the theory of change in each of the countries (e.g., outlining the quality improvement cycle and change that is expected through digitization at all levels including premix producers, food producers, regulatory authorities, and laboratories);
    c. review guidance on gender-sensitive fortification programming (being developed by GAIN during the planning phase) and integrate gender-sensitive metrics into all implementation research data collection activities; and
    d. collect relevant baseline data in each country to assess the current situation (before the digital QA/QC project), e.g., on the current roles/responsibilities, inputs/processes/outputs, and corrective actions (data indicators to be defined by the Service Provide and aligned to the PIP).
2. During pilot phase:
    a. collect relevant data to ascertain *fidelity of implementation* (i.e., delivery as intended) and *change effectiveness* (i.e., technical change in terms of time, quality and/or cost of the previous vs. digital systems and human change in terms of capacity/readiness, expectation, and need among data collectors and decision makers and the extent to which they are achieved) to confirm that the intended outputs and outcomes are being realized (i.e., the theory of change is sound) and to understand characteristics of the operating environment that drive or impede the attainment of results (data indicators and frequency of collection to be defined by the Service Provider);
    b. conduct review meetings between research and implementation teams to discuss findings and, as appropriate, recommendations for course corrective actions; and
    c. document recommendations for scale-up in the pilot mills, to additional mills in country, and across typologies of country programs.

Taken together, this process will permit course-corrective actions to be undertaken (1) if problems or missed opportunities are identified, (2) if there were flaws in our initial design assumptions, or (3) if program impact is less than expected. Findings form this implementation research will be disseminated to ensure learnings are shared and used to inform and refine program design, implementation and scale-up.

The Service Provider should propose the methods for the assessment of the above-mentioned objectives based on their expertise, but it will be expected to include desk reviews of project documents and existing data sources, and primary data collection, as appropriate.

3.2. SCOPE OF WORK

The successful applicant shall provide the following services:

- Develop a study protocol (including literature review, detailed methodology and justification, sampling plan (where applicable), data analysis plan, and data collection tools) for review and approval by GAIN.
- Obtain relevant access and data collection permissions as appropriate, e.g., government.
- Carry out all aspects of primary data collection, quality assurance, and data entry, cleaning, management and analyses (or sub-contract aspects, e.g., data collection, to local agencies in each country)
- For any primary data collected, provide GAIN with raw and clean datasets, accompanying codebooks, and syntax and output of all data analyses. If quantitative data are collected, data documentation must be provided using Nesstar[1].
- Conduct regular review meetings to discuss findings and course correction actions at an agreed upon frequency with GAIN.
- Develop baseline and final report outlines for review and approval by GAIN.
- Draft baseline and final reports, including literature review, methods, data collection activities, results, conclusions and recommendations.
- Revise and finalize baseline and final reports based on inputs from GAIN.

3.3. 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
Deadline to submit questions	25 August 2022
Proposal submission	7 September 2022
Final response regarding selection of Service Provider	26 September 2022
Contracting process finalized	10 October 2022
Inception meeting with GAIN	20 October 2022
Study protocol and data collection tools for baseline	3 November 2022
Baseline data collection completed	1 February 2023
Baseline report	1 March 2023
Review meetings with GAIN on course correction measures from baseline	To be determined
Data collection tools for ongoing data collection during pilot phase	1 April 2023
Ongoing data collection completed	1 December 2023
Final report and all datasets and data documentation (from baseline and pilot)	31 December 2023

[1] A free editor developed in conjunction with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) http://www.nesstar.com/software/publisher.html

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 rfp@gainhealth.org. Reponses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

2. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN with a detailed budget in US Dollars, including fees/travel/accommodation and any other direct costs to be incurred in the delivery of the Scope of Work. Include a brief narrative justification for line items included. The budget must be inclusive of all indirect costs. The final budget amount will have to be approved by GAIN prior to starting the project.

3. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted as two separate PDF documents as follows:

- Technical proposal:

i. Description of previous relevant work (maximum 1 page);
ii. Composition of team with names and brief biographies of all key staff (maximum 3 pages); and
iii. Detailed proposal explaining how the areas of work mentioned in the Objectives and Scope of Work will be addressed, including a framework for implementation, risk and mitigation strategy, and timeline (maximum 10 pages).

- Financial proposal:

i. Budget;
ii. Detailed narrative budget justification; and
iii. Duly completed offer of services (see section IV).

4. SUBMISSION

Completed proposals must be submitted in electronic copy to: rfp@gainhealth.org.

5. DEADLINE

Completed proposals must be submitted by **11:00 pm CEST** on **7 September 2022**.

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 or post.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

7. REVISIONS

Proposals may be revised by electronic mail and confirmed by hard copy 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 GAIN at rfp@gainhealth.org prior to making their submission.
- 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.

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 (see section IV).

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:
   [to be completed]
   [to be completed]
   [to be completed]

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 proposal to undertake the work, in accordance with GAIN's requirements specified.
   - 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 [insert month and year] in [insert location].

_____ [insert title]

Signature (applicant)

_____ [insert title]

Signature (applicant)