REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP): ENGAGEMENT OF SPECIALISED FIRM/CONSULTANTS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON VENTURE BUILDING

swisscontact

We are a leading organisation for the implementation of international development projects. We promote inclusive economic, social, and ecological development to make an effective contribution towards sustainable and widespread prosperity in developing and emerging economies.

1. About Swisscontact

Swisscontact was established in 1959 as an independent foundation by notable figures from the worlds of commerce and science in Switzerland. It is exclusively involved in international development cooperation and has carried out its own and mandated projects since 1961. Swisscontact's working principles include inclusive systems development, learning culture, evidence based adaptive management, and engaging in private sector. In addition, the organisation's sustainable criteria comprise gender equality and social inclusion, financial capability, environmental responsibility, and good governance.

2. Introduction

Swisscontact implements the Promoting Green Growth in the Ready-Made Garments Sector through Skills (PROGRESS) project with funding from the Embassy of Sweden and the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh. This project empowers Ready-Made Garments (RMG) factories to navigate the green transition, enhancing both their environmental resilience and global competitiveness.

Based on the learning of the PROGRESS project, Technology for Responsible Accountability in Corporate ESG (TRACE) has been introduced which supports the development and operationalisation of a commercially viable digital platform for better clarity, coordination, and harmonisation of ESG reporting among the key RMG stakeholders. The platform is designed to help factories and other supply chain actors streamline ESG data management, reporting, and compliance processes in response to increasingly stringent international requirements, including the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), emerging carbon pricing mechanisms, etc. The platform also has potential to support other sectors concerned with environmental sustainability, social inclusion, governance compliance, and responsible business practices, empowering them to stay competitive in a global market that now demands strict ESG accountability.

To date, Swisscontact has undertaken a comprehensive feasibility assessment that has validated the market need for the ESG digital platform and informed its commercialisation strategy. To ensure long-term sustainability and commercial viability, Swisscontact intends to engage an experienced Venture Building firm/consultants to support the design, validation, establishment, and deployment of an independent venture capable of operating, scaling, and attracting strategic partners and investment. The selected firm/consultants will provide technical advisory and backstopping support to validate and refine the ownership structure, governance mechanism, existing business model, investment mobilization strategy, support ownership transition planning, and contribute in the discovery phase of the suitable owners.

3. Background

Bangladesh's export-oriented industries are increasingly exposed to evolving Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) requirements driven by international buyers, investors, financial institutions, and regulatory frameworks. Access to major export markets is becoming increasingly contingent upon demonstrable performance in areas such as greenhouse gas emissions measurement and reduction, supply chain transparency and traceability, labour rights and workplace safety, responsible sourcing, and compliance with internationally recognised sustainability reporting standards. As a result, ESG performance is no longer merely a voluntary or reputational consideration; it has become a strategic business imperative for maintaining competitiveness, securing market access, and ensuring long-term participation in global value chains.

Despite this growing demand, Bangladesh's ESG ecosystem remains fragmented and complex. Export-oriented sectors, particularly the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry, are required to comply with multiple and often overlapping frameworks, including GRI, ESRS, Higg, SLCP, and ZDHC. This creates significant challenges for businesses, including repetitive reporting requirements, audit fatigue, inconsistent data collection practices, and increased compliance costs. At the same time, ESG-related services—such as reporting support, verification, capacity development, decarbonisation advisory, and sustainability consulting—are dispersed across multiple providers, limiting efficiency and creating barriers to coordinated ESG management.

A significant market gap therefore exists for a unified, technology-enabled ESG solution capable of consolidating ESG data management, streamlining reporting requirements, facilitating measurement and performance tracking, and connecting businesses with relevant ESG service providers through a single platform. While various digital tools and service providers operate in the market, there is currently no commercially sustainable and widely adopted ESG infrastructure capable of serving Bangladesh's export sectors at scale while responding to rapidly evolving international market requirements.

Global experience also demonstrates that technical functionality alone is insufficient to ensure the long-term success of ESG platforms. Many platforms struggle to achieve sustained user adoption, convert users into paying customers, and establish commercially viable operating models. Consequently, they often remain dependent on grant funding, donor support, or freemium models that generate initial engagement but fail to create sufficient revenue to sustain operations, continuous innovation, and market expansion.

To address these challenges and realise its long-term vision, TRACE aims to facilitate the development of an independent and commercially viable venture that will provide a unified ESG service in the country and beyond. Achieving this ambition will require validation of the business case, refinement of the commercial model, establishment of an appropriate governance and ownership structure, identification of founding and strategic partners, mobilisation of investment, and development of a scalable market deployment strategy capable of driving long-term adoption and impact.

4. Objectives of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to provide backstopping support to Swisscontact's TRACE project team in transforming the ESG platform concept into an investable and scalable venture through a structured venture building process. The selected firm/consultants shall work alongside the project team to transfer practical venture-building knowledge, provide methodologies and tools, coach the team through implementation, critically review key assumptions and outputs, and provide independent expert recommendations at critical decision points.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines the key tasks to be undertaken as part of the assessment.

This Request for Proposal (RFP) refers to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for **"**Engagement of Specialised Firm/Consultants for Technical Assistance on Venture Building**".** The ToR is attached here in this document. Please find the below link.

Access the ToR here

The ToR is also available in the Swisscontact Bangladesh website. Please click the link:

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/countries/bangladesh/requests-for-proposal

5. Proposal Submission Requirement

All interested firms/individuals must submit the following documents:

- Technical proposal outlining in detail understanding of assignment, proposed methodology and workplan, venture-building experience, digital platform commercialization experience, team composition, and knowledge transfer approach.
- The financial proposal must indicate the daily rate for working in this assignment based on 8 working hours per day. Swisscontact will assign the required number of days for each task through mutual agreement. Accommodation and transportation, if required, will be paid locally at actual costs and should not be included in the daily rate or financial proposal. At this stage, Swisscontact expects a VAT-inclusive (VAT should be indicated separately in financial proposal) daily rate from firms/consultants.
- Annexes demonstrating relevant organizational/individual experience, including descriptions of similar assignments undertaken, references, etc.
- Curriculum Vitae (CVs) of all proposed key personnel, clearly outlining their qualifications, professional experience, areas of expertise, and roles under the assignment.
- It is mandatory for the bidding organisations/individual to submit documentary evidence demonstrating their legal, taxation, and financial status. The following documents should be submitted, or equivalent documentation applicable in the bidder's country of registration:
    - A certificate of incorporation (for individual companies, a trade license) or other equivalent legal registration
    - Where applicable, registration certificates issued by relevant government authorities, regulatory bodies, or sector-specific oversight agencies
    - Tax Identification Number (TIN) or other equivalent tax registration documentation issued by a competent authority
    - Business Identification Number (BIN) or other equivalent documentation issued by a competent authority
    - Latest PSR (Proof of Submission of Return) or other equivalent documentation issued by a competent authority

6. Submission Details

Interested applicants must submit their technical and financial proposals including the supporting documents via email to bgd.trace@swisscontact.org by **10th August 2026**. The email subject line must state: **"Engagement of Specialised Firm/Consultants for Technical Assistance on Venture Building".**

Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered. Swisscontact reserves the right to accept or reject any application, in part or full, or cancel the entire procurement process without assigning any reason whatsoever. Submission of an application does not guarantee the award of the contract.