

# **Terms of Reference to Conduct the CODE Project Baseline Study**

## **Background**

Swisscontact is an independent non-profit development organisation established in 1959 by representatives of the Swiss private sector and civil society. Our development work focuses on private sector-led, sustainable economic development with improved quality of life for all in developing and emerging countries. A key focus is to strengthen the skills of individuals and foster the competitiveness of businesses.

Swisscontact, registered as an International Non-Governmental Organisation in Nepal, has been operating in Nepal since 1991. Currently, Swisscontact in Nepal has five development programmes across all seven provinces.

Creating Opportunities for Youth in Digital Economy (CODE) is a European Union-funded project implemented by Swisscontact, in partnership with Restless Development Nepal and the Robotics Association of Nepal, from 2026 to 2028 in Madhesh and Gandaki Provinces.

The project aims to empower young women and men, particularly women and underrepresented groups, to participate meaningfully in Nepal's growing digital economy. CODE strengthens digital literacy, promotes market-relevant digital skills, facilitates access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, and supports youth engagement in digital governance and policymaking. Working with local governments, civil society, training institutions, schools, and the private sector, CODE contributes to an inclusive digital ecosystem where youth can benefit from digital transformation.

## **1. Objectives of the Baseline**

The objective of the assignment is to establish credible baseline values for selected CODE project indicators and generate evidence on the current situation, gaps, and opportunities among target youth to support project monitoring and measurement of results.

## **2. Scope of Work**

The service provider will:

- Review relevant project documents and indicators and develop/refine the baseline data collection tools and methodology.

- Collect quantitative and qualitative data from participating youth, youth-led businesses, and relevant stakeholders.
- Establish baseline values for key impact and outcome indicators, including youth income, youth-led business revenue and employment, digital literacy and safe online practices, and youth participation in local government policy consultation.
- Analyse and interpret the findings to identify key baseline conditions, differences among relevant target groups, and factors affecting the achievement of project results.
- Recommend appropriate endline targets and measurement approaches based on the baseline findings and project targets.

### 3. Geographic Scope

The baseline shall cover the working area of Madhesh and Gandaki Provinces:

|   | <b>Municipality</b>                 | <b>Province</b> |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Pokhara Metropolitan City           | Gandaki         |
| 2 | Rupa Rural Municipality             | Gandaki         |
| 3 | Madi Rural Municipality             | Gandaki         |
| 4 | Birgunj Metropolitan City           | Madhesh         |
| 5 | JeetpurSimara Sub-Metropolitan City | Madhesh         |
| 6 | Parsagadhi Municipality             | Madhesh         |

### 4. Substantive Scope by Outcome

The service provider will establish baseline values for the selected impact and outcome indicators through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The relevant target population is estimated at approximately 800 youth and 100 youth-led businesses. The sample size and sampling approach will be determined by the service provider based on the relevant target population, geographic coverage, and indicators being measured. The indicative data sources and methods presented below are intended to guide the baseline study and are not prescriptive. The service provider may propose alternative or additional data collection methods and tools, where appropriate, based on the nature of the indicators and data required. The final approach will be mutually agreed with the CODE project team during the inception phase. Additional relevant indicators may also be proposed by the consultant and included upon mutual agreement with the project team, where they contribute to establishing a comprehensive baseline for the project.

|                                                                                                                                                                          | Indicators                                                                                                                                         | Indicative Data Source/Method         | Respondent         | Project Target |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Impact: Inclusive development and youth empowerment of youth in Gandaki and Madhesh provinces through enhanced employability and entrepreneurship in the digital economy | Number of participating youths reporting average annual net income increase                                                                        | Questionnaire survey                  | Youth (18-35)      | 300            |
|                                                                                                                                                                          | Number of youth-led businesses reporting increased revenue                                                                                         | Questionnaire survey                  | Youth (18-35)      | 20             |
|                                                                                                                                                                          | Additional jobs created by youth-led business supported                                                                                            | Questionnaire survey                  | Youth (18-35)      | 50             |
| Outcome 1: Young people enhance digital literacy and awareness for their safe, informed, and responsible participation in the digital economy.                           | Extent to which participating youth demonstrate and apply digital literacy and safe online practices.                                              | Minimum Eight FGDs 4 in each province | Youth (15-35)      | 10,000         |
| Outcome 3: Local governments institutionalise youth participation in decision making and adopt/amend digital policies.                                                   | Number of youth and other stakeholders report that their opinions are valued and considered during local government policy consultation processes. | Questionnaire survey                  | Youth (18-35), CSO | 50             |

## 5. Methodology

The service provider will establish baseline values for the selected impact and outcome indicators through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The sample size for the quantitative survey should be determined based on the relevant target population, geographic coverage, and indicators being measured. The indicative data sources/methods presented above are intended to guide the baseline study and are not prescriptive. The service provider may propose alternative or additional methods and tools, subject to mutual

agreement with the CODE project team during the inception phase. Additional relevant indicators may also be proposed by the consultant and included upon mutual agreement with the project team.

## **6. Ethical considerations**

The study will adhere to standard ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation, and verbal consent with the right of participants to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Participants' privacy and confidentiality will be strictly maintained. No personal identifiers will be included in reports or publications, and all data will be securely stored with access limited to authorized members of the research team. The study will uphold the dignity, privacy, and well-being of all participants throughout the process.

## **7. Data Quality Assurance and Validation**

A data validation process will be conducted to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the baseline findings. Following data collection, the service provider will perform data cleaning, consistency checks, and verification of quantitative and qualitative results. Preliminary findings will then be reviewed by the Swisscontact project team to assess methodological rigor and alignment with project indicators and logframe assumptions. Feedback received during the review process will be incorporated into the final report, along with the submission of cleaned datasets, data collection tools, annexes, and presentation materials.

## **8. Deliverables**

- Inception Report outlining the proposed methodology, sampling design and size, indicator-method matrix, workplan, and data collection plan.
- Finalized Data Collection Tools, including Kobo-based quantitative survey forms and qualitative data collection guides.
- Cleaned Baseline Dataset, including Kobo data, codebook/data dictionary, and relevant qualitative data.
- Draft Baseline Report presenting methodology, findings, baseline values, analysis, and proposed endline targets.
- Final Baseline Report incorporating feedback from the CODE project team, including a consolidated baseline indicator matrix, raw data and recommendations.

## **9. Timeline**

The assignment is expected to commence upon contract signing, anticipated around mid-October 2026, and be completed by 30 November 2026. The consultant is expected to

complete fieldwork within 2–3 weeks, with the remaining period allocated for inception and preparation, data cleaning and analysis, reporting, validation, and finalization of deliverables.

## **10. Reporting & Supervision**

The service provider will report to Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. All reports and deliverables shall be submitted in English. Regular coordination meetings will be held as required.

## **11. Required Qualifications of Service Provider**

- Shall be a legally registered organization/company in Nepal.
- Shall have at least three years of demonstrated experience in conducting baseline studies, assessments, surveys, or similar assignments.
- Shall have a qualified team with a minimum of three years of relevant research and data collection experience.

## **12. Proposed Team Composition**

The consultancy team shall comprise qualified professionals with complementary expertise relevant to the assignment. The team shall collectively demonstrate expertise in:

- Research design and sampling
- Quantitative data collection and statistical analysis
- Qualitative research and analysis
- Report writing and presentation of research findings

The service provider shall clearly define the roles and responsibilities of key team members and provide their relevant CVs as an annex to the technical proposal.

## **13. Selection Criteria and Methodology**

The service provider who qualifies or who meets the basic eligibility requirements as per ToR required qualifications (clause 9) will be assessed in further process. The technical proposals or technical capacity of the service provider will be assessed following the approved evaluation criteria. Those who scored the basic pass marks (50%) in technical evaluation will be eligible for the financial evaluation. The technical proposal carries a weightage of 75%, while the financial proposal has a weightage of 25%. The cost negotiation process will be applied if deemed necessary during the selection process. Cost negotiation will be done with the service provider who stood first rank on technical proposal evaluation. If first rank drops, then it will automatically apply to the 2nd ranked service provider and same apply if any in subsequent process.

## 14. Application Process for Service Provider

Interested service provider shall submit their technical and financial proposal with a cover letter and eligibility criteria to [npl.code@swisscontact.org](mailto:npl.code@swisscontact.org) by the 7 October 2026 with the subject line “Application for Baseline Study - CODE Project.” The technical and financial proposals shall be submitted as separate documents. Incomplete applications or submissions received after the deadline will not be considered.

The following documents shall be submitted:

### 1. Legal Documents - Mandatory

- Copy of Company/Firm Registration Certificate
- Copy of PAN/VAT Registration Certificate
- Copy of latest Tax Clearance Certificate (2081/2082)
- Signed Declaration of Independence (Annex 1)

### 2. Technical Proposal

The main technical proposal shall not exceed 5 pages, excluding annexes. The proposal should include:

- Organization Profile and relevant experience
- Proposed Approach and Methodology
- Proposed Team Composition and roles of key personnel
- Relevant Experience, including at least three similar assignments

Supporting documents, including CVs of key personnel, references or links/samples of previous assignments, and other relevant information, should be provided as annexes and will not count toward the 5-page limit.

## Annex 1

### Re: Declaration of Independence

We hereby declare that we as an organisation and our staff do not have any conflict of interest with Swisscontact/CODE its key management team and its staff directly related to execution of the proposed assignment **Baseline Study of Creating Opportunities for Youth in Digital Economy (CODE)**. We do not have any business, professional, personal, or other interest, including, but not limited to, the representation of other clients, that would conflict in any manner or degree with the performance of its obligations under the proposed assignment.

We ensure that if any such actual or potential conflict of interest arises during this assignment, we shall immediately inform Swisscontact/CODE in writing.

We further declare that we have not been punished for an offense relating to the concerned profession or business and that our Company/Firm has not been declared ineligible by any law of land.

We are aware and accept that if we fail to declare any information mentioned above OR if, in the reasonable judgment of Swisscontact/CODE such conflict poses a material risk to the performance and obligations under this Agreement, then Swisscontact/CODE may terminate the Agreement immediately upon written notice to Contractor.

Authorized Signature:

Name and Title of Signatory:

Name of Firm/Company/Institute:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Date:

*“Conflict of Interest” refers to a situation in which an organisation or individual or close relative of such individual has competing personal or financial interests that could potentially compromise their ability to make impartial decisions or act in the best interests of others.*

*“Close relative” here includes spouse, parent, child, grandparent, brother, sister, grandchild, parent-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, great-grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, greatgrandchild, grandparent-in-law, brother/sister-in-law, grandchild-in-law, cousin, cousin brother/sister-in-law, cousin son/daughter-in-law.*