Evaluation of FOREWARN Disaster Hackathon 1.0 & 2.0

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS | 27 July 2025

START NETWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

Start Network is a UK Charity & Company limited by guarantee, operating as a global networked organisation. Start Network is made up of 134 non-governmental organisations across six continents, ranging from large international organisations to local and national NGOs. Our programmes allow members to deliver humanitarian action around the world. Our mission is to create a new era of humanitarian action that will save even more lives. We are not driven by media headlines or political will, we are here for the communities affected by, and at risk of, crises.

Start Fund Bangladesh (SFB) is a nationally managed, rapid-response funding mechanism established in April 2017 under the Start Network. It aims to quickly address under-the-radar, small to medium-scale humanitarian crises in Bangladesh through locally driven solutions. Mirroring the global Start Fund, SFB is designed to release funds within 72 hours of a crisis alert, enabling swift and coordinated responses by local, national, and international NGOs. SFB operates through a unique governance model with 40 member organizations, international and local/national NGOs ensuring inclusive decision-making and strong local leadership. The fund supports both rapid response and anticipatory action, such as for flooding, cyclones, and disease outbreaks. SFB has influenced national disaster management practices and exemplifies how locally led humanitarian financing can enhance early action, resilience, and community impact in crisis situations across Bangladesh.

The FOREWARN (Forecast-based Warning, Analysis and Response Network) was launched in 2016 when the Start Fund of Start Network opened its Anticipation window to support the member agencies to act ahead of the occurrence of hazardous events and their impacts. FOREWARN Bangladesh, launched in 2019, as a national platform adapted from the global FOREWARN model to support anticipatory humanitarian action in Bangladesh. Initiated by Start Fund Bangladesh and Start Network, it brings together academics, forecasting agencies, sectoral experts, humanitarians, and community

representatives. The platform enhances collaboration across these groups to improve understanding and response to disaster risks by aligning forecasts with humanitarian needs. Its main purpose is to support timely and effective action before crises occur. FOREWARN Bangladesh contributes practical insights and recommendations to Start Fund Bangladesh's anticipatory activities. Key focus areas include hazard risk analysis, trigger setting, hazard and risk monitoring, and the development of early action plans.

Bangladesh, being one of the most disaster-vulnerable countries in the world, is already experiencing the early impacts of climate change, including recurring hazards with increasing frequency and intensity. Despite significant progress in disaster preparedness and anticipatory action, there remains a lack of innovative approaches and tools to address the evolving nature of crises. Moreover, the integration of science and technology in disaster management is still limited. According to the National Youth Policy 2017, youths are considered to be the wealth of the country which is approximately 30% of the total population according to the estimation of Population and Housing Census 2021 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics but are not overly involved in shaping the future disaster management.

To address these challenges and foster innovation in disaster risk management by promoting youth engagement, FOREWARN Bangladesh—together with its partners—launched the FOREWARN Disaster Hackathon, creating a platform that empowers students and early-career professionals to transform their knowledge into impactful, action-oriented solutions for strengthening anticipatory action in disaster management landscape of Bangladesh. This Hackathon not only seeks to inspire participants but also to equip them with the necessary tools, mentorship, and real-world insights to develop viable prototypes. The Hackathon drew on the expertise of a wide array of mentors and experts from national and international institutions, including meteorologists, disaster science professors, data scientists, government disaster management officials, and technical specialists. Two phases of the Hackathon have already been completed, which have given evidence of innovation to support future disaster risk managers for informed decision making and equipped with technologies to combat with the challenges. For example, a prototype is currently being developed for a cyclone track prediction system powered by AI, combined with context-specific guideline generation using a large language model. This innovative solution is being jointly mentored by scientists from the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and FOREWARN Bangladesh to ensure both technical accuracy and practical relevance.

Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO) is hosting Start Network programmes (DRF, FOREWARN, LCA, HIF) in Bangladesh. ESDO is a national level NGO have ongoing operation in 54 district of the county with have legal registration under NGO Affairs Bureau and others.

1.2 SCOPE OF CONTRACT

Further information on the scope of work can be found in section 3, **Terms of Reference.**

2. INSTRUCTIONS FOR BIDDING

2.1 TIMESCALES

Bidders are requested to review and respond to sections 3 and 4, with completed sections and requested documents submitted via email (no hard copies required) to procurement@esdo.net.bd and CC to BD.FOREWARN@startnetwork.org

Deadline for submission: August 09, 2025

2.2 START NETWORK NOT BOUND

This Request for Proposal (RFP) does not constitute an offer and Start Network does not bind itself to accept any proposal. Start Network reserves the right to accept a proposal in part, rather than in full. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact to procurement@esdo.net.bd and CC to BD.FOREWARN@startnetwork.org.

2.3 CONFIDENTIALITY

Documentation in relation to this RFP and any proposals received in response to it shall be treated as private and confidential save where the disclosure is required by law.

Bidders shall not:

- Release any information relating to the RFP and the proposal that they intend to make; other than with professional advisers who need to be consulted with regards to the preparation of the proposal;
- Canvass directly or indirectly with any other bidder concerning the award of a contract;
- Canvass directly or indirectly with a member of Start Network's staff (including its consultants and contractors) concerning the award of the contract.

2.4 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Start Network and any bidders shall declare any conflicts of interest as soon as practicable, to allow for the efficient management of any potential/actual conflicts

2.4 CONTRACT

The formal contract will be as mutually agreed.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

3.1 SCOPE OF WORK

Background
Bangladesh remains one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. To drive youth-led innovation in disaster risk management, FOREWARN Bangladesh, under the Start Network, implemented two sequential innovation-focused initiatives: FOREWARN Disaster Hackathon 1.0 in 2023 and Hackathon 2.0 in 2024. Both hackathons aimed to stimulate technological and data-driven solutions for disaster risk management and early actions from university students and early-career professionals using the Create–Check–Cultivate (C3) model to innovate solutions from a local disaster management perspective. The initiatives included experts' engagement in mentoring alongside the partners from academia, scientists, forecasting agencies, disaster risk managers, high techs, etc.

- **Hackathon 1.0 (2023):** Pioneering edition involving 36 teams from 26 universities, resulting in 8 final ideas which might be the key change makers in disaster risk management (DRM) and recommendations for developing a "Youth Experts" network. Key partners included Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT), Open Mapping Hub - Asia Pacific (OMH), and Bangladesh Open Innovation Lab (BOIL).
- **Hackathon 2.0 (2024):** Scaled-up edition engaging 84 teams from 39 institutions, with enhanced participation through a campus ambassadorship program. New partners included Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), Department of Disaster Management (DDM), University of Dhaka (Department of Meteorology and Department of Disaster Science & Climate Resilience), Centre for Resilience and Youth (CRY), and Centre for Data Science Research (CDSR).

Given the scale, stakeholder engagement, mentorship structures, innovation output, and societal relevance of both events, a comprehensive evaluation is needed to assess their effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, and impact on youth, innovation ecosystems, and anticipatory action in Bangladesh.

Purpose of the Evaluation
The primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, relevance, and outcomes of both Hackathons and recommending for future Disaster Hackathon planning contextualized to changing needs and aligning to the Start Network's Crisis Anticipation strategy as well as other key initiatives such as Early Warnings for All initiatives, etc. Specifically, the consultant will evaluate how well these initiatives achieved their intended objectives during inception phase (elaborated in the TOR of 1st and 2nd Hackathon) and the extent to which they contributed to building a pipeline for youth-driven innovation in the humanitarian and disaster management sectors. Based on the assessment and the context

of Bangladesh, the consultant will provide recommendations that consider Start Network's priorities on locally-led anticipatory action in Bangladesh and meaningful engagement of experts and youth for future iterations and evolutions of the FOREWARN Disaster Hackathon.

The consultant will propose an appropriate evaluation methodology to effectively assess these aspects, but it is expected that the evaluation will draw evidence from participant outputs, process documentation, interviews with stakeholders, Hackathon participating teams, mentors, etc. and survey data, aiming to inform decisions on the future design and scalability of the FOREWARN Disaster Hackathon model.

Scope of Evaluation

The evaluation should cover:

- Planning: Design and rationale of the Hackathons including relevance to the national disaster risk management context and the Start Network's anticipatory action framework.
- Implementation fidelity: How effectively the C3 (Create–Check–Cultivate) methodology was applied.
- Stakeholder engagement: Participation of mentors, organizers, universities, students, experts, and institutional partners.
- Disciplines: Representation from universities and disciplines.
- Innovation outcomes: Development of ideas into prototypes by the Hackathon team,
- Relevance: Examine the adoptability or applicability to real world disaster challenges to Bangladesh.
- Capacity strengthening and mentorship: Quality and depth of mentorship, knowledge transfer, and skill development of the Hackathon team through the Hackathon process.
- Institutional alignment: Fit with FOREWARN and Start Network's long-term strategies on innovation, early action, and localization process.
- Feedback synthesis: Capturing insights and recommendations from students, mentors, partners, and judges.

Key Evaluation Objectives and Guiding Questions

The consultant should explore, among others, the following themes:

- Contextual Relevance: How were the objectives of the hackathons contextualized for Bangladesh's disaster landscape? What gaps were identified and addressed?
- Strategic Fit: In what ways do the hackathons align with the organizational strategy of FOREWARN and Start Network?
- Innovation Impact: What number of innovations were developed? How many of them were prototyped by the Hackathon team? Were any tested or selected for piloting?
- Stakeholder Engagement: How effectively were mentors, institutions, and co-organizers engaged? What was the breadth and depth of youth participation?

- Disciplines: What levels of diversity were observed in terms of academic disciplines, and universities?
- Sustainability: Did the model contribute to long-term partnerships or continued youth innovation efforts? Are there signs of continued stakeholder interest?
- Mentorship Effectiveness: Was the mentorship process effective across both CHECK and CULTIVATE stages? How did it contribute to idea maturation?
- Modality Appropriateness: Is the Create–Check–Cultivate model optimal? What modifications, if any, are recommended?
- Learning and Community Value: What value did participants derive from the hackathon? Did the events build a resilience-centered innovation community?
- Feedback Mechanisms: What were the perceptions and suggestions from mentors, participants, and stakeholders regarding the overall structure and outcomes?

Methodology

The consultant will propose an appropriate evaluation methodology to effectively assess these aspects, but it is expected that the evaluation will use a mixed method approach that should include:

- Desk review of both hackathon concept notes, TORs, reports, submissions, scoring sheets, media content, feedback forms, communication materials, and relevant documentation.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with organizers, mentors, selected student teams, judges, and expert reviewers.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participants.
- Online Survey for wider participant feedback.
- Prototype review and mapping.
- Diversity analysis using participation data to assess representation by geography, discipline, and gender.

It is also expected that the consultant will suggest a way in which this evaluation will be externally peer reviewed throughout this process to ensure robustness.

Deliverables

The consultant will be responsible for the following outputs:

1. Inception Report detailing methodology, work plan, data sources, and evaluation tools.
2. Mid-Evaluation Brief.
3. Final Evaluation Report (max. 30 pages, plus annexes) including:
    - Executive Summary
    - Methodology
    - Key findings
    - Conclusions and analysis of thematic areas
    - Case studies and stories of change

- Recommendations for future hackathon iterations

4. Presentation of findings to FOREWARN and partners either online or in-person.

Timeline

The assignment is expected to take 6 weeks, commencing on 24 August 2025. A detailed work plan and deliverables schedule will be developed in consultation with the consultant during the inception phase. The consultant will also be required to join bi-weekly catch-ups with the Technical Specialist-CARF and Technical Partnership Adviser regularly throughout the assignment period.

Budget and Payment Terms

The budget will be negotiated with the selected consultant and will be commensurate with qualifications and deliverables. Payments will be made in traches against deliverables:

- 30% upon submission and approval of the Inception Report
- 40% upon submission of draft Evaluation Report
- 30% upon submission and acceptance of the Final Report and presentation

Application Procedure

Interested consultants should submit:

- Expression of interest (max 2 pages)
- CV(s) of consultant(s)
- Example(s) of previous evaluation work (relevant qualitative and innovative is preferrable)
- Proposed methodology and work plan (short outline)
- Budget breakdown

3.2 MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

The Consultant will be selected by a panel of Start Network colleagues made up of people across the organisation.

Mr. Md. Salauddin, Technical Specialist – Crisis Anticipation and Risk Financing will be the day-to-day focal point. Ms. Ella Gerry, Technical Partnership Adviser will have management oversight.

3.3 KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Relevant documents for review will be shared at a later stage on request, if required. For a general overview, please refer to our website.

3.4 TIMELINE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- 31 July 2025: Deadline for questions and query on the RFP

- 09 August 2025: Deadline for proposals
- 17 August 2025: Interviews with shortlisted consultants
- 19 August 2025: Selection of consultant and contracting
- 24 August 2025: Start of work

3.5 QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant should have the following skills and qualifications:

- Proven experience in conducting programme evaluations, especially in relation to youth engagement, innovation or humanitarian technology programs.
- Expertise in qualitative and participatory research methods.
- Strong understanding with disaster risk management, anticipatory action, and the humanitarian ecosystem in Bangladesh.
- Demonstrated understanding of innovative ecosystems (hackathons, start-up incubation, etc.).
- Strong writing, analytical, and facilitation skills.
- Strong track record of working collaboratively and stakeholder management skills

4. BIDDER'S PROPOSAL

4.1 Bidder Information

Please complete and return the following template to procurement@esdo.net.bd and CC to BD.FOREWARN@startnetwork.org with attachments in PDF and a subject line: *RFP – FOREWARN Bangladesh Disaster Hackathon Evaluation. You can also find the ToR in www.esdo.net.bd*

4.2 Cost

The price and rates quoted shall include all costs (taxes, services, travel and expenses, together with all general risks, liabilities and obligations, set out or implied).

4.2.1 OTHER COSTS

If there are any further costs or expenses that you propose charging, please detail these in the template. Start Network will not be liable for any additional costs that are not set out in the Bidder's proposal.

4.2.2 ASSUMPTIONS

Please set out any assumptions you have made in determining your proposed costs.

4.2.3 Every £ Counts in Humanitarian Response

We are committed to reducing the charity's operating costs so that maximum resource can be spent on programmes which directly benefit communities affected by disasters and emergencies.

Should you be willing to provide any element of the services on a pro bono basis, offer a cost reduction, service enhancement or any other charitable support to the organisation, please set out in your proposal.