**Terms of Reference (ToR)**

**for**

**Conducting a feasibility study on “Preventing Child Marriage in Bangladesh with a Community Based Approach (2nd phase)”**

**July 2025**



**The Hunger Project Bangladesh**

2/2 Heraldic Heights, Mirpur Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka -1207

**About The Hunger Project Bangladesh**

The Hunger Project (THP) began its global journey in 1977 in New York City as an international volunteer-based organization committed to ending hunger and poverty. With consultative status at the United Nations since 1985, THP now operates in 22 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Australia. Guided by the conviction that sustainable development begins with people themselves, THP is not a conventional NGO or donor agency—it is a belief, a commitment, and a grassroots movement.

THP Bangladesh started its work in 1991 after registration with the NGO Affairs Bureau (Reg# 557). Since then, it has evolved into the country’s largest volunteer-driven development movement, rooted in the belief that every human being is born with immense potential. If people are given the opportunity to develop their inner capacities and empowered from within, they can take charge of their own lives, become the architects of their own future, and lead transformational change in their communities.

With a presence in 10 regional offices and a national office in Dhaka, THP Bangladesh is supported by a dynamic coalition of grassroots leaders, youth activists, development professionals, bilateral partners, and global citizens. Together, they work to spark a nationwide awakening—mobilizing individuals and communities to take collective action against hunger and poverty through creativity, self-reliance, and leadership.

**Project Background**

Human rights law defines child marriage (CM) as form of gender-based violation[[1]](#footnote-1). In Bangladesh, in 2023 at least 42% of young women were married before turning 18, a sharp increase from 31% in 2020, according to report BSVS (Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics, 2023)[[2]](#footnote-2). The COVID -19 pandemic has further exacerbated this issue, leading to an alarming surge in child marriage.

Despite notable progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment, Bangladesh continues to have the highest child marriage rate in Asia and remains among the highest globally. CM affects the most vulnerable girls, and compounds risks of sexual violence and poor reproductive health (SDG5). These harmful practices take place across countries, cultures, religions, and ethnicities.

In this context, in the project of “Preventive Child Marriage in Bangladesh with a Community Based Approach” we observed that many of girls, even who were grade six, were married off with assistance of a local ruling party politician and their associates. It exposes the inadequacy of ongoing measures and initiatives, as even local government representatives have been found to disregard the law. In most cases, guardians fabricated birth certificates from the UNO/Chairman of UP to show their girls as being of legal age for marriage, in an attempt to evade scrutiny and legal consequences. It is clear that the legal and institutional frameworks to prevent child marriage are not working as expected. The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, makes aiding or forcing child marriage a bailable offence. It lacks provisions to nullify child marriage, even if the minor is abducted, kidnapped, or trafficked. Moreover, marrying girls still remains a deep-rooted patriarchal practice, which the government’s social awareness campaigns are failing to address. The school-level national curriculum does not comprehensively address child marriage’s adverse effects and prevention strategies. Remote areas also often lack social force or institutions to conduct awareness campaigns. Additionally, the increasing access to social media among teenagers and its misuse are contributing to their involvement in risky love affairs, elopement and cyberbullying. A study by BakiBillah and Chowdhury (2022) explored the factors influencing the sexual and reproductive health-related misuse of digital media in Bangladesh[[3]](#footnote-3). Due to fears of such involvement and concerns over protecting their family’s honour, many parents resort to forcefully marrying off their underaged daughters by any means. Moreover, the national emergency number 109 for seeking help in preventing child marriages is helpful, of course, but most of the people, particularly in rural areas, do not know about this. On the top of all these issues, the authorities have largely failed to recognize and properly respond to the disastrous fallout of COVID-19 on young girls and their families.

We, therefore, take stern action to prevent underage marriage. Instead of undertaking ad hoc measures, a comprehensive approach is needed, including mass social awareness campaigns, robust legal and institutional frameworks to prevent such incidents, and proper support for those already affected.

In line with this approach, THP Bangladesh implemented the project *“Preventing Child Marriage in Bangladesh with a Community-Based Approach”* in 14 unions across Tangail and Barishal districts from October 2022 until June 2025. Through this program, we have played a key role in building a strong, community-driven movement against child marriage by empowering CSOs and CBOs, engaging diverse stakeholders, and enabling girls to voice their choices regarding marriage while asserting their sexual and reproductive health rights. Additionally, we have fostered strong partnerships with relevant authorities, leading to a significant number of girls successfully halting their marriages and continuing their education.

In the light of the above, The Hunger Project Bangladesh and The Hunger Project Germany collaborated to submit a project Concept Note for a second phase of the previously mentioned project to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which has been approved for the development of a full proposal. In this context, BMZ has requested to conduct a feasibility study as third-party approach by an independent Consultant/ firm to assess the feasibility of the proposed second phase of the project. This feasibility study should be done in conjunction with the assessment of outcomes and implications of the (1st phase) project entitled “*Preventing Child Marriage in Bangladesh with a Community Based Approach”*.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this feasibility study is to assess whether the proposed project design of the second phase is suitable to plausibly achieve the intended outcomes and impacts under the given contextual conditions. The study will examine the project's underlying assumptions, the feasibility of its objectives, and the adequacy of its strategy in addressing the complex and systemic drivers of child marriage in the target areas.

It will also identify areas where the project concept may need to be adapted or improved—particularly regarding the intervention logic, outcome structure, and relevance to local needs and institutional realities. The insights and recommendations gained from the study will directly inform the finalization of the project proposal and ensure that the intervention is both context-sensitive and results-oriented and viably builds upon the outcomes and impact of the first phase project.

The feasibility study is a mandatory requirement for BMZ funding and will serve as a key planning tool for both proposal development and implementation of the 2nd phase. It should be conducted in accordance with the assessment questions outlined in this ToR, and take appropriate account of contextual factors at micro-, meso- and macro levels, including national strategy and policy frameworks, relevant background literature, and existing evaluation findings in terms of internal baseline and endline study. The study may prioritize open questions that remain unanswered in existing documentation.

**Geographical location and target beneficiaries**

The 2nd phase project will be implemented in five Upazilas across three districts in Bangladesh:

* Barishal District (Babuganj and Agailjhara Upazila),
* Jhalakathi District (Jhalakathi Sadar Upazila),
* Tangail District (Bhuapur and Gopalpur Upazila).

These five Upazilas comprise a total of **32 Unions**, and define the geographical scope of the feasibility study, which will assess the viability and contextual relevance of the proposed intervention across the entire target area of the second phase.

The project will directly reach a total of 64,763 individuals, including:

* 13,319 adolescent girls and 8,690 boys (aged 11–18) from 128 secondary schools, who will benefit from peer-led initiatives, SRHR education, and safe school environments;
* 450 women leaders;
* 790 local government representatives and public officials to strengthen community-based prevention systems; and
* 41,514 community stakeholders, including influential citizens, parents, community and religious leaders, youth leaders, and marriage registrars (key stakeholders in shaping social norms and enforcing legal frameworks).

The indirect beneficiary target is expected to benefit the broader population by improving awareness, institutional responsiveness, and community capacity to prevent child marriage. The entire population of the project region is approximately 1,428,311 people.

**Roles**

The expert/ firm conducts the study independently and in close cooperation with The Hunger Project Bangladesh, which acts as the official commissioning organization. “The consultant shall submit a financial proposal, including a detailed breakdown of costs and applicable taxes.”

The expert is enabled by The Hunger Project Bangladesh to work solely on concrete interviews or analysis that is directly relevant for the study. The Hunger Project Bangladesh can be contacted to resolve technical and content questions of study implementation.

Information provided by The Hunger Project Bangladesh:

* Project concept note
* A country study on prevention of child marriage in Bangladesh
* A list of experts for interviews, incl. all necessary contact details, establishing contact if needed
* Project documents incl. description, proposal, results and outcomes of the phase 1 project.
* List of guiding questions
* 1st phase project completion report
* Baseline and endline report

**Scope of work**

The central aim of the feasibility study is to assess whether the proposed project approach is suitable to plausibly achieve its intended outcomes and impacts under the given contextual conditions. The study will critically examine the proposed project’s relevance, objectives, implementation strategy, and underlying assumptions, and identify areas for potential improvement.

The study shall assess the proposed project design with reference to the OECD DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) and provide well-founded recommendations to strengthen the proposal. Particular attention should be paid to the outcomes and lessons learned of the phase 1 project, impact matrix, its ability to address structural barriers to preventing child marriage, and the contextual risks and opportunities at all levels.

The feasibility study (max. 30 pages, excluding annexes) should cover:

* An analysis of relevant experiences, outcomes, lessons learned, and challenges from the first project phase (2022–2025), with a focus on implications for the design and feasibility of the proposed second phase. The consultant shall review relevant documents (e.g. reports, evaluations, case studies) and, if appropriate, conduct interviews with key stakeholders involved in the first phase.
* An assessment of the plausibility of achieving the proposed objectives and outcomes, given the local political, social, and institutional conditions;
* An analysis of the feasibility of planned activities and their suitability in addressing the key drivers of child marriage and SRHR;
* A presentation of the initial situation and problem context at micro-, meso- and macro-levels, supported by essential project-relevant data;
* A critical assessment of the project concept’s alignment with the needs of target groups, existing structures, and institutional responsibilities;
* An evaluation of the project’s expected performance across all OECD DAC criteria;
* Concrete recommendations on how to improve the project design, including the outcome structure, impact matrix, and proposed measures;
* Suggestions for outcome-level indicators, monitoring fields, and data sources for impact monitoring;
* An analysis of opportunities and risks related to implementation, cooperation with key stakeholders, and long-term sustainability;
* Recommendations for capacity strengthening required for successful implementation and sustainability of results;
* Evidence-based proposals for refining the project’s objectives and theory of change, if gaps, inconsistencies, or unrealistic assumptions are identified.

**1st Phase Project Outcomes**

**Outcome 1:** Youth from the project districts are empowered in their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the negative and harmful impacts of child marriage, and are enabled to take action in their communities.

**Outcome 2:** 504 Youth Leaders are mobilized and empowered to make their voices heard, advocate for girls’ rights, and promote social change in their communities

**Outcome 3:** Local civil society has enhanced skill in strategic planning and advocacy and is able to exert increased influence on local decision-makers in preventing child marriage in the districts and hold them accountable and responsible.

**Methodology**

The feasibility study will be based on an analysis of the concept note and the national country study on the situation of child marriage in Bangladesh. In addition, it will include stakeholder engagement, participatory methods and a context-based initial situation analysis.

A core part of the study will be developed through the following methodological components:

* A concise questionnaire for selected stakeholders (maximum 2 pages);
* Focused interviews with relevant actors involved at community, institutional and policy level;
* Application of participatory methods, tools and resources suitable for the project context and target groups;
* Where appropriate, focus group discussions (e.g. with adolescents, youth leaders, women leaders or community-based structures);
* A desk review of relevant background materials, including:
	+ the approved concept note;
	+ the national study on child marriage prevention;
	+ and documents and insights from the first project phase (2022–2025), such as reports, monitoring data, lessons learned and documented challenges.

The consultant/ firm may determine the most appropriate mix of methods and shall document and justify all methodological choices.

The applied approach must ensure a structured initial situation and problem analysis at micro, meso- and macro-levels. This includes:

* the identification of current problems and needs of the beneficiaries related to child marriage prevention and SRHR needs;
* the prioritization of key issues to be addressed by the project;
* an analysis of existing local potential, actors, institutional structures, networks and social mechanisms that can be strengthened or built upon;
* the identification of systemic gaps and limitations in the legal, institutional or social response;
* and the consideration of relevant contextual factors, such as local power dynamics, conflict sensitivity and risks.

In all methodological steps, the consultant must ensure:

* the application of gender- and child protection-sensitive standards during data collection;
* an inclusive and safe consultation process that respects the agency and dignity of all participants;
* a meaningful analysis of the plausibility of achieving the project’s intended outcomes under current context conditions, as required by BMZ.

**Process and tentative timeline**

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| **Milestones/meetings** | **Deadline/time frame** |
| Call for tender to potential consultants/ firms with request for proposal  | 25July 2025 to 5 August 2025 |
| Selection and contracting  | 6 August to 10 August 2025 |
| Start of consultancy  | 20 August 2025 |
| Kick-off (clarifying open questions, confirming suggested work plan)  | 25 August 2025 |
| Preparation of the study incl. desk study preparation of the report annotated outline and design of interview questionnaire  | 26 August to 31 August 2025 |
| Field Study interviews & focus group discussions & data collection | 1st September to 15 September 2025 |
| Short progress report and status share in the meeting  | 2 October 2025 |
| Submission of first interim draft report (including preliminary findings and emerging recommendations) and discussion with THP Bangladesh | 9 October 2025 |
| Submission of final feasibility study report  | 15 October 2025 |

**Evaluation of the planned project based on OECD DAC criteria**

The following guiding questions shall structure the assessment of the project concept. The aim is to evaluate whether the proposed approach is likely to achieve its intended results, under the given context conditions, and to identify options for improving the project logic and design.

**Relevance** – To what extent is the planned project doing the right thing?

1. Will the planned project address a key development problem or a significant developmental bottleneck in the project region?
2. Are the focus, priorities, objectives (approach), and target groups clearly defined and aligned with the needs and realities of the beneficiaries?
3. To what extent does the project objectives and design adequately take into account the specific needs of the beneficiaries and any structural obstacles in the project region, partner/institution, or policy programs?
4. Are the norms and standards of the approach compatible with those of the beneficiaries?
5. Is the project designed to be conflict-sensitive (Do No Harm Principle)?
6. Does the project aim to create an enabling environment for girls to pursue education, claim their SRHR, and reject child marriage?

**Coherence** – How well does the project fit into the broader landscape?

1. How consistent are the planned activities with human rights principles (inclusion, gender equality and participation), and any conventions or relevant standards/guidelines?
2. To what extent do synergies and connections between the planned project and other interventions planned/implemented by The Hunger Project and other stakeholders?
3. What similarities or overlaps exist between the beneficiaries and projects implemented by other stakeholders in the same context? To what extent does the intervention add value and avoid duplication?

**Effectiveness –** Is the project likely to achieve its intended objectives?

1. Are the cause-effect relationships (including assumptions) plausible? What negative effects might arise?
2. Is the chosen methodological approach suitable and sufficient for achieving the project objective? Are alternatives required?
3. At what level (multi-level approach) do you anticipate implementing additional measures to increase effectiveness?
4. How will changes be measured? What indicators (fields) are most suitable?

**Efficiency –** Is the proposed project’s planned use of funds a cost-effective method to achieve its objectives?

1. To what extent can the planned measures be implemented with the envisaged funds and personnel in the proposed time period?
2. To what extent can the envisaged spending be allocated cost-effectively, and are the investments, operating expenses and personnel in proportion to the intended goals?

**Impact (significance)** – What contribution does the planned project make to achieving higher-level development policy impact?

1. What particular contribution does the project objective (outcome) make to the overall objective (impact)?
2. To what extent does the planned project build structures, set examples and have a broad impact? On what levels will norms or structures be changed?

**Sustainability –** To what extent will the positive impact remain once the project has ended (without additional external funding)?

1. How can the sustainability of the results and impact be ensured and strengthened (structurally, economically, socially and ecologically)?
2. What long-term capacities will be established in the beneficiaries to enable them to continue the implemented measures independently?
3. What positive changes (role behaviour, mechanisms, networks, etc) will be of long-term benefit to civil society?
4. What personal risks for those implementing the project, or institutional or contextual risks, may influence the sustainability of the project? How can these be minimized?

**Recommendations:**

On the basis of the findings from the DAC assessment, the study shall formulate **concrete strategic recommendations** to strengthen the proposed project concept. These should focus on:

* Necessary adjustments to the objectives, impact structure or assumptions to enhance coherence and feasibility;
* Suggestions to strengthen gender equality and inclusion, particularly regarding girls and persons with disabilities;
* Opportunities to better anchor the project in existing structures and ensure a long-term impact;
* Identification of missing or underdeveloped components that could strengthen the project’s effectiveness and relevance;
* Considerations on whether the cause-effect relationships are sufficiently robust, and how they could be clarified or better substantiated;
* Recommendations on how key findings and data from the study could be reflected in the impact matrix, including suggestions for impact monitoring fields and indicators;
* Potential synergies with other THP programs or external initiatives (e.g. on adolescent health, education or gender equality), and how these could be systematically leveraged to maximise impact.

**Outputs and deliverables**

The feasibility study should not exceed 30 pages (excl. annexes and additional data material) and must be written in English. It should contain the following chapters:

1. **Purpose, objectives, context and use of the feasibility study** – including the assessment of the plausibility of achieving the planned objectives and impacts under the given context conditions.
2. **Methodology** – describing the approach, tools, data sources and stakeholder engagement.
3. **Initial situation and problem analysis** – at macro-, meso- and micro-levels, with reference to context factors, root causes and structural obstacles.
4. **Project executing agency in the country (local executing agency)** – roles, capacities and structures of the local implementing organisation (THP Bangladesh).
5. **Target groups and other actors (at micro and macro level)** – including roles at micro and macro levels (e.g. girls, parents, schools, local government, ministries, civil society).
6. **Assessment of the planned project** – based on the OECD DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) and including analysis of the project logic and structure.
7. **Recommendations** – with concrete suggestions for the adjustment and improvement of the proposed project concept and its impact logic.

In addition to the written report, the consultant will provide the following deliverables:

1. **Field study and data collection** – to be conducted in the selected project communities (for a period up to 3 weeks)
2. **Interim report** – to be submitted within 5 weeks of signing contract, including preliminary findings and emerging recommendations.
3. **Feedback session** – to be conducted after submission of the draft report, in collaboration with The Hunger Project and other key stakeholders.
4. **Final feasibility assessment study report** – to be submitted within 2 months after signing contract, incorporating feedback and providing the final feasibility assessment.

**Expert Profile of the feasibility study**

**Required qualifications and characteristics**

The consultant shall:

* act independently from all project stakeholders, including THP Bangladesh and THP Germany;
* have proven expertise in the country context of Bangladesh;
* be fluent in written and spoken English;
* work in a professional, result-oriented and well-structured manner, with a clear and critical perspective on the project context and study focus;
* be able to communicate findings clearly, using focused and concise language;
* demonstrate excellent communication skills, especially in multi-stakeholder settings.

**Professional and technical qualifications:**

The consultant must have:

* substantial professional experience in at least three of the following areas: gender equality, child rights, social norms and values, climate impact, or community empowerment;
* proven country expertise in Bangladesh;
* prior experience conducting feasibility studies or project evaluations for NGOs or public development cooperation actors;
* solid background in social science methods (e.g., qualitative interviews, participatory tools, structured questionnaires);
* experience with multi-actor or multi-stakeholder partnerships is considered an asset;
* familiarity with relevant donor guidelines for feasibility studies, especially those of the BMZ.

To ensure impartiality and transparency, the consultant shall explicitly document any potential limitations, conflicts of interest or biases that may affect the objectivity of the study.

**Confidentiality and Copyright**

All papers/documents/reports shared with the Consultant/ firm will be treated as the confidential property of THP Bangladesh and should not be used outside of THP Bangladesh without prior permission. Information received by the Consultant/ firm from project and THP Bangladesh should be treated as confidential. The Evaluation report will be owned by THP Bangladesh and disseminated to authorities as the organization sees fit. Consultant/ firm will provide the basic training for the collectors on data collection ethics in order to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents and the information they provided. The selected consultant/ firm will abide by the rules and policy of THP Bangladesh.

**Application process**

The Hunger Project Bangladesh is looking for a consultant/ firm to carry out the above activities within the proposed timeline.

Interested applicants are encouraged to submit their offer including:

* Expression of interest
* CV incl. references to prove the required substantial work experience (see paragraph "expert profile”)
* Financial offer (separate disclosure of applicable taxes) The consultant shall submit a financial proposal, including a detailed breakdown of costs and applicable taxes.
* Short description (max. 1 page) of the methodology and approach they plan to apply when conducting the feasibility study

**Deadline for applying is 5th August 2025**

**Tendering documents (technical and financial proposal)**

1. Detailed CV of the consultant and team composition
2. Technical proposal, comprising description of study approach, outline of methodology and sampling, Workplan (breakdown of the number of days allocated for various activities/ tasks)
3. Detailed Financial proposal (listing a break-down of costs for all activities)
4. Three references
5. List of similar assignments carried out in the past three years, including the names of clients.
6. Evidence of independence of the Consultant/ Reviewer
7. Copy of the legal document like -VAT (BIN), TIN certificates, last submission of tax return and trade license of the firm shall be submitted along with the proposal.
8. 4% of earnest money of the total quoted price In favour of The Hunger Project must be submitted in form of pay order/bank draft. No cheque will be accepted.
9. **Fees and duration of assignment**

The Consultant must complete the assignment and submit the final feasibility report by 15 October, 2025. The Consultant/firm will be paid fees between both party’s selection completion and agreement signing. The Consultant/firm should have required documentation like; vat & Tax and other relevant documents. Vat & Tax would be deducted as per government rules of Bangladesh.

1. Quotation shall be dropped in the tender box kept in the organisation’s office (The Hunger Project, 2/2 Mirpur Road, Level 4, Block-A, Mohammadpur Dhaka -1207) latest by at 3.00 pm of 5th August 2025 and tender box shall be opened on the same day at 4.00 PM in presence of bidder or their representative, if any. No quotation shall be accepted after this time. For any clarification, please contact Mrs. Ambica Roy, phone- number-01912165213
1. [Child marriage - UNICEF DATA](https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/alarming-upswing-child-marriage-3576476> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=3675725 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)