***Terms of Reference (ToR):***

**Hiring a Consultancy for Baseline Study – Freedom of Expression for Digital Governance-Swadhinata project**

**Background**

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organization that advances children’s rights and equality for girls, striving for a just world by working alongside children, young people, supporters, and partners. With a vision of a world where all children realize their full potential in societies that respect rights and dignity—a vision echoed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Plan International tackles the root causes of the challenges facing girls and vulnerable children. The organization supports children from birth to adulthood, helping them prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. Through its global presence in over 75 countries and more than 80 years of experience, Plan International drives change in policy and practice at local, national, and international levels, building powerful partnerships to create lasting impact for children.

Plan International envisions a world where all children realize their full potential in societies that uphold rights and dignity. Operating in Bangladesh since 1994, Plan International Bangladesh (PIB) has been implementing high-quality, impactful programs with children at the center of its work. Under its Country Strategy 2030, PIB focuses on empowering women and girls through access to quality education, skills, and decent work, promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), reducing gender-based violence, and enhancing resilience to climate change. The organization operates from its country office in Dhaka, with a strong presence in Cox’s Bazar and Ukhiya. PIB’s current strategic priorities are delivered through three thematic areas—LEAD, Skills & Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (SOYEE), and SRHR—with Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) as cross-cutting themes. By 2030, PIB aims to influence the lives of approximately 36 million people, including 18 million women, by strengthening inclusive, community-based child protection mechanisms and driving systemic change in gender norms and power dynamics.

1. **Project Overview**

Freedom of Expression (FoE) is a constitutional right in Bangladesh (article 37 and 39.1) , supported by international treaties like the ICCPR . However, despite these commitments, government practices often undermine FoE. In December 2023, CIVICUS downgraded Bangladesh’s civic space from "narrowed" to "closed," citing widespread crackdowns, surveillance, and harassment of HRDs, journalists, and civil society. This has fostered fear, self-censorship, and impunity for state authorities. Laws like the Cyber Security Act and Foreign Donations Regulation Act further restrict civic space, suppress dissent, and limit independent journalism. Media outlets, conventionally pro-government, censor news and curtail investigative reporting. Additionally, many citizens, especially marginalized groups, lack awareness of their rights due to limited access to information. This, coupled with low digital literacy, leaves them vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation. High internet costs and limited access to devices exacerbate the issue, particularly for low-income families, women, and marginalized communities. The rise of AI and deep fakes further complicates efforts to combat misinformation, eroding access to accurate information and weakening democratic accountability. The 2024 regime change in Bangladesh, following a historic popular youth movement, has created new opportunities for civil society engagement and the protection of FoE. The resignation of the former Prime Minister after widespread anti-government protests has been seen as a "second liberation" by many, signaling hope for a more inclusive political future. However, structural reforms are still pending, particularly concerning repressive laws like the Cyber Security Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC 54), which continue to undermine citizens' rights to expression, privacy, and liberty. The government has initiated reforms, but meaningful change will depend on the political landscape's future evolution. Although public perception regarding FoE has shifted, deeply rooted systemic changes are yet to be fully realized.

The project Action strengthens CSOs, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), and journalists by promoting FoE and supporting them in navigating digital challenges, particularly in countering misinformation and AI-generated disinformation. It raises public awareness, especially among youth, women, minorities, and marginalized groups, empowering them to speak up and overcome self-censorship (Lot 5, priority 1 and 2). The Action facilitates local advocacy dialogues on media freedom and governance while safeguarding participants' legal, digital, and physical well-being through a nationwide support mechanism. Additionally, it sensitizes duty bearers to accept constructive feedback from these groups and include them in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the Action aligns with the call’s global objective of strengthening CSOs as independent actors in good governance, focusing on fundamental rights, civic engagement, and digital literacy. It supports EU priorities like inclusive governance, women’s rights, and challenging discriminatory norms, and aligns with SDGs 5, 10, and 16. Despite shrinking civic space, national and regional efforts, such as amendments to the Cyber Security Act, Foreign Donation Regulation Act and implementation of the Right to Information Act , continue to promote FoE with support from community media and international donors. The project will promote these current existing initiatives, building on the experiences of PIan and MJF past and ongoing initiatives

1. **Objectives of Baseline Study**

The overall objective of the Baseline evaluation is to conduct a robust and objective study in order to assess the status of the indicators of project’s Log-frame and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Annex-3).

More specifically the purpose of the study is to assess the present status of intended outcomes of the Swadhinata project as:

* Civil society, human rights defenders (HRD), and media actors, successfully promote fundamental rights, create public awareness and inclusive debate, while countering disinformation, misinformation, and online harassment.
* Conducive environment is established where people, incl. youth, minorities and marginalized people, enjoy open internet, media freedom and access quality information to form opinions and speak up to participate in political, cultural and social life.
* To assess the extent to which the project applied Gender Transformative approaches and explicitly aimed for results that improve the rights of children and young people and gender equality.

These questions aim to assess the current status relevant to the project's intended outcomes, providing a baseline for future evaluation.

**Regarding Outcome 1: Civil society, human rights defenders (HRD), and media actors, successfully promote fundamental rights, create public awareness and inclusive debate, while countering disinformation, misinformation, and online harassment.**

1. **Promotion of Fundamental Rights:**
   * What are the current levels to which and methods by which civil society organizations (CSOs), human rights defenders (HRDs), and media actors are able to promote fundamental rights?
   * What are the perceived challenges and successes in their current efforts to promote fundamental rights?
2. **Public Awareness and Inclusive Debate:**
   * To what extent are CSOs, HRDs, and media actors currently contributing to public awareness on key issues related to fundamental rights and fostering inclusive public debate?
   * What specific topics are most frequently addressed by CSOs, HRDs, and media actors, and what are the current levels of public engagement with these discussions?
3. **Countering Disinformation, Misinformation, and Online Harassment:**
   * What is the current prevalence and impact of disinformation, misinformation, and online harassment experienced by the public, CSOs, HRDs, and media actors?
   * What strategies, if any, are CSOs, HRDs, and media actors currently employing to identify, address, and counter disinformation, misinformation, and online harassment, and what is their perceived effectiveness?
   * What are the key challenges faced by CSOs, HRDs, and media actors in countering these phenomena?
4. **Capacity and Needs Assessment:**
   * What are the existing capacities (e.g., skills, knowledge, resources, networks) of CSOs, HRDs, and media actors to effectively promote fundamental rights, facilitate public debate, and counter digital harms?
   * What specific capacity-building needs do CSOs, HRDs, and media actors identify to enhance their work in these areas?

**Regarding Outcome 2: Conducive environment is established where people, incl. youth, minorities and marginalized people, enjoy open internet, media freedom and access quality information to form opinions and speak up to participate in political, cultural and social life.**

1. **Open Internet and Media Freedom:**
   * How do different groups of people, particularly youth, minorities, and marginalized populations, perceive the current state of internet openness and media freedom in Bangladesh?
   * What are the perceived barriers (e.g., technical, financial, social, legal) to accessing and utilizing an open internet and diverse media platforms for these groups?
2. **Access to Quality Information:**
   * What are the primary sources of information for youth, minorities, and marginalized people, and how do they assess the quality and reliability of the information they access?
   * To what extent do these groups feel they have access to diverse, credible, and quality information necessary to form informed opinions?
3. **Opinion Formation and Participation:**
   * What are the current levels and forms of participation of youth, minorities, and marginalized people in political, cultural, and social life?
   * What factors (e.g., societal norms, self-censorship, digital literacy, safety concerns) enable or hinder their ability to freely form opinions and express themselves in public discourse, both online and offline?
4. **Perception of Conducive Environment:**
   * How conducive do youth, minorities, and marginalized people feel the current environment is for them to express their opinions, engage in public debate, and participate in decision-making processes?
   * What are their aspirations for a more conducive environment for free expression and participation?

**3. Scope of Base-line Study**

**3.1 Study Scope**

In order to establish the baseline of Swadhinata Project, this study includes primary and secondary data collection to status against all indicators included in the Swadhinata M&E Framework.

Indicators for expected outcomes to be measured in this baseline study are:

**Impact indicator 1:**

Improved feeling of freedom of expression of CSOs, youth, minorities, marginalised groups, HRDs, and media actors on political, cultural and social issues.

**Outcome-1 indicators**

* % of trained CSO members, HRDs and media actors who report that they feel safe to express their opinion freely in the public sphere
* % of CSOs, HRDs, media and community actors (targeted in the project), who report being affected, receive comprehensive referral support services.
* # of victims of human rights violations (particularly youth, CSOs, HRDs and media actors, and community members targeted by the project) directly benefiting from assistance funded by the EU (EU indicator of Global Europe Results Framework (GERF 2.30)) disaggregated by sex, age.
* % of youth groups which have been meaningfully involved by Plan International in its project cycle management

**Outcome-2 indicators**

* % of people (disaggregated by sex) including youth, minorities and marginalized people who report feeling safe and confident when expressing their opinion in the public sphere
* % of people (disaggregated by sex), including youth, minorities, and marginalized people, who exercise their rights freely and confidently in political, cultural, and social life.
* % of community members, CSOs, HRDs, journalists and media actors (targeted by the project) who mention to know about the existence of the project’s referral mechanisms
* % of consultation processes, including those within public hearing, media house, etc. in which youth report being meaningfully engaged.

**3.2 Geographic Scope**

Data collection for the Base line Study for the Swadhinata project will be conducted in all 64 Districts of the 8 divisions (Dhaka, Chottogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Barishal, Mymensign & Rangpur) in Bangladesh as implementation sites of the project.

**3.3 Scope of work**

The scope of work for this assignment will preferably include, but not limited to-

* Review of project proposal, interventions by locations and components, results framework, and other necessary documents i.e., relevant documents of government of Bangladesh, relevant strategy of Plan international Bangladesh, available study on relevant issues, including government reports and project documents.
* Propose appropriate methodology (mixed method including a statistically significant sample size with considerations for geographic distribution and representative populations; and data collection instruments (qualitative and quantitative) in consultation with Plan international Bangladesh, as well as pre-test and finalize the instruments to cover gaps in data collection in order to get more substantial qualitative outcome data for behavioral change related to child protection among parents and community members
* Prepare and submit an inception report containing the final methodology and workplan.
* Administer data collection in the study area that includes supervision, cross validation, quality control and data transcription.
* Engage qualified enumerators; train them in data collection instruments and quality control.
* Data management and analysis as per the specific study objectives.
* Figure out the baseline values/report, findings of the monitoring and progress reports, of the indicators of the project mentioned in the Results Framework.
* Produce draft report and share with Plan International Bangladesh for feedback. Finalization of the report by addressing all necessary feedback.
* Produce final report after addressing all feedbacks.
* Maintain regular communication with the key contact person(s) of Plan International Bangladesh throughout the assignment period.
* Ensure all original data collection (whether in paper or electric form), i.e., raw data, are maintained and submitted to Plan International Bangladesh.
* Prepare a one-page paper presentation along with PowerPoint presentation based on the findings for wider circulation/communication purposes.
* Conduct an online/In person validation workshop on the findings of the baseline study with the relevant stakeholders.
* Produce draft report, presentation of the key findings along gender assessment and share with Plan International Bangladesh for feedback. Finalization of the report and presentation by addressing the feedback.

**3.4 Users of the Baseline**

The baseline findings will serve as a vital resource for the project’s various stakeholders, including the project team, Plan International Netherland National Office, partners, and other relevant stakeholders. These findings will be used for several key purposes, including assessing targets, evaluating project progress, and undertaking a comparative analysis with the baseline status at the start of this 36- months project. In addition, the results of the baseline study will be used to refine the implementation plan for the project, ensuring its efficient and strategic execution. Furthermore, the grants, communication, and programme staff will use the baseline findings to contribute to broader sectoral learning, thereby facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting best practices

**5. Methodology**

The baseline assessment will employ a **rigorous mixed-methods approach**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a holistic understanding of the project's baseline context. This approach will ensure triangulation of findings, validating insights and providing deeper explanations for observed patterns.

**5.1 Study Design, Population and Target**

The study design will primarily follow a **sequential explanatory design**, where initial quantitative data collection will be followed by qualitative methods (FGDs and KIIs) to explore and explain the patterns and trends identified in the quantitative findings.

A **stratified sampling design** with **proportional allocation** will be utilized to determine the sample sizes for the household screener, adolescent survey, and parents' survey. Strata will be carefully defined to include key demographic features (e.g., age, sex, geographic location) and other relevant characteristics pertinent to the project's objectives (e.g., specific minority groups, types of CSOs).

**Sample size calculations** will be based on a **95% confidence level** and a **5% margin of error**. An additional **10% contingency** will be factored in to account for anticipated non-respondents or incomplete questionnaires, ensuring the final achieved sample adequately represents the target population.

A critical aspect of the sampling strategy will be to ensure **oversampling of marginalized groups**, including people living with disabilities and other marginalized community members, to enable robust disaggregated analysis and meaningful insights into their specific contexts and experiences. The consultant(s)/firm will be responsible for defining the precise oversampling proportions in consultation with the SWADHINATA team. For hard-to-reach groups such as certain Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) or online activists, **snowball sampling** may be considered as a supplementary sampling technique, carefully managed to maintain methodological rigor.

The consultant(s)/firm will be responsible for translating all data collection tools into appropriate local languages to ensure accurate and culturally sensitive data capture. The detailed methodology, including specific sampling frames and population estimates, will be finalized by the consulting firm in close consultation with the SWADHINATA team.

**5.2 Data Collection Process**

The data collection process will prioritize efficiency, accuracy, and ethical considerations, with a strong emphasis on digital approaches and participatory methods where appropriate.

Following the finalization of data collection tools in consultation with the Plan International Bangladesh MERL team, the consultant(s)/firm will conduct comprehensive **onboarding and training for data enumerators**. This training will specifically include orientation on gender and age sensitivity in data collection, ethical protocols, and the use of digital data collection tools.

The consultant(s)/firm will be responsible for managing all necessary equipment, including tablets and stationery for data collection. Data collection will proceed according to an agreed timeline, with the consultant(s)/firm providing direct supervision. Local WRO, MJF, and Plan International Bangladesh will maintain an active monitoring role, conducting regular process and progress checks and implementing robust data quality assurance measures as deemed necessary.

**5.2.1 Document and System Review**

A thorough review of existing relevant documentation and systems will be conducted to provide contextual background and complement primary data. This will include project documents, previous assessments, relevant policies, and reports from partner organizations.

**5.2.2 Beneficiaries Surveys (Quantitative Data Collection)**

A **household screener** will be employed as a preliminary tool to list all usual household members and visitors, capturing essential demographic data such as age, sex, relationship to the head of household, and other key characteristics. This screener will be instrumental in identifying eligible respondents for subsequent surveys and in collecting data for critical M&E indicators, such as early marriage prevalence.

The consultant is required to propose the **sample size for the household screener**, ensuring it yields statistically significant results for key prevalence indicators within the project areas. The proposed method and parameter values for this calculation will be subject to revision and validation based on statistical advice from the Consultant and the SWADHINATA team.

Quantitative data for outcome indicator measurement will be collected through structured surveys targeting relevant groups. The consultants will propose and provide detailed estimates for the baseline study, including a rationale for the chosen survey design, methodology, sampling methods, and sampling frame.

**Key Indicators and Disaggregation:**

The quantitative surveys will collect data to measure the following outcome indicators, with granular disaggregation to capture the diversity within the target populations:

| Indicators | Levels of Disaggregation | Data Sources |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome-1: Civil society, human rights defenders (HRD), and media actors, successfully promote fundamental rights, create public awareness and inclusive debate, while countering disinformation, misinformation, and online harassment.** | | |
| % of trained CSO members, HRDs and media actors who report that they feel safe to express their opinion freely in the public sphere | CSO Members, HRD Member, Media people/Journalist (Age, sex, ethnicity, geographic location, disability status) | Household Survey, Adolescent Survey, Parents' Survey |
| % of CSOs, HRDs, media and community actors (targeted in the project), who report being affected, receive comprehensive referral support services | Data from referral Information/Documents | Referral service logs, Surveys |
| # of victims of human rights violations (particularly youth, CSOs, HRDs and media actors, and community members targeted by the project) directly benefiting from assistance funded by the EU (EU indicator of Global Europe Results Framework (GERF 2.30)) disaggregated by sex, age | CSO Member, HRD Member, Media people/Journalist (Age, sex, ethnicity, location & disability) | Referral service logs, Surveys |
| % of youth groups which have been meaningfully involved by Plan International in its project cycle management | • Youth organisations’ gender profile (only/ mostly girls/ mixed/ mostly boys)  • Youth organisations’ age profile (< 18 years, mixed, > 18 years)  • Youth organisations’ area of residency profile: rural/ peri-urban/ urban  • Youth organisations’ inclusion of children with disabilities | CSO/WRO |
| **Outcome-2: Conducive environment is established where people, incl. youth, minorities and marginalized people, enjoy open internet, media freedom and access quality information to form opinions and speak up to participate in political, cultural and social life.** | | |
| % of people (disaggregated by sex) including youth, minorities and marginalized people who report feeling safe and confident when expressing their opinion in the public sphere | CSO Member, HRD Member, Media people/Journalist, Minorities community member (Age, sex, ethnicity, geographic location, disability status) | Household Survey, Adolescent Survey, Parents' Survey |
| % of people (disaggregated by sex), including youth, minorities, and marginalized people, who exercise their rights freely and confidently in political, cultural, and social life. | CSO Member, HRD Member, Media people/Journalist, Minorities community member (Age, sex, ethnicity, geographic location, disability status) | Household Survey, Adolescent Survey, Parents' Survey, CIVICUS Report, Article 19 FoE, Freedom House report |
| % of community members, CSOs, HRDs, journalists and media actors (targeted by the project) who mention to know about the existence of the project's referral mechanisms | CSO Member, HRD Member, Media people/Journalist, Minorities community member (Age, sex, ethnicity, geographic location, disability status) | Household Survey, Adolescent Survey, Parents' Survey |
| % of consultation processes, including those within public hearing, media house, etc. in which youth report being meaningfully engaged. | Youth people (CSO, HRD, Media people/Journalist, Minorities community) (sex, ethnicity, geographic location, disability status) | FGDs, KIIs, Observation, Youth Consultations |

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* **Tool Development:** Consultant will provide baseline tools for the Household Survey. The Consultant will work with Plan International Nederland and PIB technical advisors to review, refine, pilot, and finalize these tools. The Consultant is specifically expected to develop comprehensive qualitative tools (FGD and KII guides).
* **Sample Size Determination:** The Consultant is responsible for verifying estimated population figures and validating sample sizes to ensure sufficient statistical power and representativeness across all target groups, particularly marginalized populations through oversampling.
* **Risk Management and Data Quality Assurance:** The Consultant must propose a comprehensive approach to risk management and quality assurance throughout the study. This includes rigorous processes for refining survey tools, developing a robust sampling framework, enumerator and supervisor recruitment and training (including on ethical conduct and sensitive data handling), field work protocols, and data cleaning procedures. **Risk management will explicitly include considerations and protocols to mitigate safeguarding risks to children and young people, as well as real-time distress protocols for participants discussing sensitive topics like harassment or surveillance.**
* **Gender and Age Sensitivity:** The Consultant must ensure all data collection tools and methodologies are highly responsive to gender and age dynamics (including challenges, availability, and norms) within targeted communities. Data collectors will receive adequate orientation to collect all data in a gender and age-sensitive manner, ensuring inclusivity and preventing harm.

**5.2.3 Qualitative Data Collection**

Qualitative data collection will deepen the understanding of quantitative findings, explore nuances, and capture rich narratives and perspectives from various stakeholders.

**5.2.3.1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

FGDs will be conducted with project participants and stakeholders to assess their experiences during project implementation, gain a better understanding of the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, document successes, challenges, and lessons learned, and develop recommendations for future project implementation. The methodology will consider using **photovoice or digital storytelling** as innovative qualitative methods to empower participants and gather visual narratives.

FGDs will be carried out with the following key groups, with group composition carefully considered for sensitivity and balance:

* CSOs/Women Rights organizations
* National Youth Council (Department of Youth)
* National Children Task Force (NCTF)
* Youth Network, Journalists
* Community Radios and Local Media
* Social Media Influencers
* Local Contents Creators, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist (BFUJ)
* National and 8 divisional media organizations
* Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)
* Young Leaders’ Platform (YLP), online network of HRDs

The consulting firm will prepare a detailed list of guiding questions and/or checklists for each FGD group, designed to elicit rich and relevant information.

**5.2.3.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)**

KIIs will provide in-depth perspectives from individuals with expert knowledge or unique insights relevant to the project's objectives. In addition to targeting actors/stakeholders mentioned above, KIIs will also include representatives from various government bodies and national institutions.

A suggested list of KIIs includes:

* Government duty bearers from the Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, ICT Division, and local administrations.
* National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

The Consultant will propose appropriate sample sizes for KIIs and a strategy for their conduct, given the geographic scope. This may include considerations for **remote data collection via telephone** where feasible and appropriate, while maintaining data quality and ethical standards. Where possible, the consultant should aim for equal representation of males and females in the KIIs to ensure gender-balanced perspectives.

The consulting firm is expected to prepare a comprehensive list of guiding questions and/or checklists to be used during KIIs, tailored to the specific expertise of each informant.

**5.3 Data Analysis**

The data analysis phase will be robust and comprehensive, applying specific analytical lenses to ensure a nuanced understanding of the findings.

* **Quantitative Data Analysis:** Quantitative data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical software (e.g., SPSS, R, Stata). Analysis will include descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages) and inferential statistics as relevant to assess relationships between variables and changes over time. All quantitative data will be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, geographic location, and disability status to highlight disparities and specific needs of different groups.
* **Qualitative Data Analysis:** Qualitative data from FGDs and KIIs will undergo thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key insights. This will involve coding, categorizing, and interpreting the qualitative data.
* **Mixed-Methods Integration & Triangulation:** A core component of the analysis will be the **triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings**. This will involve comparing and contrasting results from different data sources and methods to validate insights, explain observed quantitative patterns through qualitative narratives, and provide a more comprehensive and robust interpretation of the baseline situation.
* **Analytical Lenses:** The analysis will explicitly apply:
  + **Gender Lens:** Examining how findings differ across genders and the underlying gender norms and power dynamics.
  + **MIYP (Most Impacted Youth and People) Lens:** Focusing on the experiences and needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable youth and people, ensuring their voices are central to the analysis.
  + **Intersectional Analysis:** Recognizing that individuals experience multiple forms of identity and disadvantage simultaneously (e.g., a young woman with a disability from a minority ethnic group). The analysis will explore how these intersecting identities shape experiences and outcomes.
* **Digital Data Analysis (where feasible):** Given the digital governance theme, the analysis may also incorporate **social media sentiment analysis** or other relevant digital data analysis techniques if online surveys or mobile-based data collection are employed.

The consultant is expected to integrate the **OECD-DAC** criteria throughout the entire baseline assessment process, from study **design and methodology** to data collection, analysis, and reporting. This includes ensuring the study assesses the **relevance** of the project's objectives to the context and needs, establishes initial data points for measuring future **effectiveness** and **impact** against the logframe indicators, considers aspects of **efficiency** in current practices, and identifies factors influencing the long-term **sustainability** of outcomes. The assessment should also reflect principles of **coherence** where applicable.

**6. Child, Young People & Adult Ethical Safeguards**

Plan International is committed to ensuring that the rights of those participating in data collection or analysis are respected and protected, in accordance with the *Ethical MERL Framework* and our *global Safeguarding Policy and PSHEA Policy*. These documents can be found in the Annexure. **The consultant(s)/firm will obtain the necessary ethical approval from relevant institutional review boards (IRB) before commencing the study.** All applicants should include details in their proposal on how they will ensure ethics and child protection in the data collection process. Specifically, the consultant(s)/firm shall explain how appropriate, safe, non-discriminatory participation of all stakeholders will be ensured and how special attention will be paid to the needs of children and other vulnerable groups. The applicants should include details on how they will ensure that their methods uphold the dignity, safety, privacy, and sensitivities for the girls and young women that they interact with. The consultant(s) shall also explain how confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be guaranteed. The consultant must coordinate with PIB to obtain and adhere to approval processes from a relevant authorized body before the commencement of data collection.

**7. Gender Equality & Inclusion**

Achieving gender equality, promoting gender justice, realizing girls’ rights and fostering an inclusive society are core objectives of Plan International’s work as an organization dedicated to child rights and equality for girls. Plan International’s GE&I Policy states that:

* We confront and challenge discrimination and human rights violations based on gender, including GBV, and other forms of exclusion.
* We also challenge stereotyping and unequal power relations between women, men, boys, and girls to promote gender equality, girls’ rights, and inclusion.
* We foster an organizational culture that embraces and exemplifies our commitment to gender equality, girls’ rights and inclusion, while supporting staff to adopt good practice, positive attitudes and principles of Gender Equality and Inclusion (GE&I).

Consultants are required to provide a statement within their proposal on how they will promote GE&I in the different stages of the study – including design of study and tools, recruitment and training of enumerators, data collection and analysis, visits and report writing, dissemination of results — in line with Plan International’s GE&I Policy and commitments. This must also consider any GE&I related risks related to the study and how these will be mitigated.

**8. Risk Management**

The Consultant must take all reasonable measures to mitigate any potential risk to the delivery of the required outputs of this consultancy on time and meet the expected quality. As such, bidders should submit a risk management plan that covers (at minimum):

* Key assumptions underpinning the successful completion of the end line evaluation, anticipated challenges and estimates of the level of risk for each risk identified
* Contingency plans that will be put in place to mitigate against any occurrence of each of the identified risks
* Specific safeguarding risks and mitigating strategies.

**9. Data Quality Assurance**

The Consultant is required to submit a quality assurance plan that sets out the systems and processes for ensuring the quality of all key deliverables from the start to end of this consultancy. This should include the proposed approaches to:

* Piloting of all tools.
* Training of enumerators, field supervisors, facilitators, interviewers, and note-takers
* Logistic and management planning.
* Field work protocols and data verification, including back-checking and quality control by supervisors.
* Data cleaning and editing.

**10. Ethics Approval**

The Consultant must coordinate with PIB to obtain and adhere to research ethics approval processes of any other relevant bodies before commencement of data collection. Full ethics approval will be obtained before the end line activities commence, as required.

**11. Disclosure and Ownership of Information**

It is understood and agreed that the Consultant shall, during and after the effective period of the contract, treat as confidential and not divulge, unless authorized in writing by PIB, any information obtained in the course of the performance of the Contract. Information will be made available for the Consultants on a need-to-know basis. All required field visits will be facilitated by PIB staff.

All ownership and copyright for final data collected during the end line evaluation is held by Plan International.

Obligations regarding non-disclosure of information and intellectual property rights will be specified in the contract for this consulting mandate.

**12. Roles, Responsibilities, and Management**

The Consultant will report to the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Specialist at PIB, who will be responsible for overseeing the overall baseline line study process.[[1]](#footnote-2) The Consultant will keep the M&E Specialist continually informed on the progress of the assignment through updates via in-person meetings, email and virtual conferences. The Consultant will also collaborate closely with the Plan International Nederland program and technical support staff, who will support with the design of the Baseline evaluation and the review and development of data collection tools, data quality protocols and procedures to guide data collection[[2]](#footnote-3) and entry.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the Consultant are as follows:

* Review relevant project documents, including the LF and M &E Framework.
* Validate sample size for the different data collection efforts and present an overall sampling strategy
* Review and revise quantitative data collection tools
* Design qualitative data collection tools
* In coordination with PIB, ensure that all necessary research ethics approvals are obtained on time, if applicable.
* Recruit translators, enumerators/data collectors and field supervisors (as necessary), as well as data entry operators, ensuring gender balance
* Prepare and conduct enumerator training, with support from PIB and the project team, including co-facilitation of a safeguarding component[[3]](#footnote-4)
* Ensure all tools are translated into appropriate languages and piloted with women, men and adolescent girls and boys prior to enumerator training
* Suggest any changes required to the tools, post-piloting, to PIB and Plan International Nederland, with final revisions subject to approval
* If applicable, develop digital tools for tablet-based data collection
* Oversee data collection including piloting, supervision and spot checking
* Ensure that all data collection activities are gender responsive, respect safeguarding of programme participants principles and are safe from a health perspective
* Provide regular updates on progress in data collection
* Establish data entry mechanisms and protocols for qualitative and quantitative information.
* Review data entry to ensure data quality and consistency, and take corrective actions, where necessary
* Analyze data through descriptive statistics for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data
* Prepare report with overall findings of the baseline line study
* Liaise with the PIB and Plan International Nederland offices for technical support throughout the process, and integrate feedback provided
* Ensure all training materials and hard copies of raw data and transcripts are maintained and submitted to PIB, along with a softcopy of the final dataset and qualitative analysis
* Agree to and uphold at all times Plan International’s various policies on Child Proection, safeguarding, and GE&I.

**13. Expected Competencies/Qualifications**

* Master’s degree in Governance, Mass communications and/or other Social Sciences, Statistics or related fields
* Demonstrated experience in coordinating and administering large scale baseline studies, including gender-sensitive data collection and entry, data management and storage, preferably for studies involving adolescents.
* Experience conducting research with digital governance, freedom of speech, online platforms and social media.
* Demonstrated experience in training, facilitating and supervising survey enumerators and data entry operators to collect and enter data as per high quality standards
* Experience with mobile data collection is preferred
* Demonstrated experience in quantitative and qualitative data analysis
* Knowledge and experience with information, Right to Information and data privacy and security related laws and legal provisions in Bangladesh
* Strong writing and communication skills (English).
* Ability to produce high quality work under tight timeframes.
* Ability to work collaboratively with PIB and Plan International Nederland, and integrate feedback as required
* No history of violation of child and girls’ rights.

**14. Deliverables and Timeframe**

**14.1 Study Deliverables**

The consultant will be expected to deliver the following deliverables to PIB within the timeframe stated.

**14.1.1 Inception Report**

Inception report within 10 working days of contract signing - a detailed assessment/survey plan on the assessment proposed will be submitted to PIB for approval.

* Detailed description of the methodology (surveys design, methodology, sampling methodology, sample size and sampling frame) and a detailed execution plan.
* Questionnaires or interview forms.
* FGD and KII guides will also be submitted for review at this stage.

**14.1.2 Data**

Once data collection, entry and cleaning are finalized, the Consultant is expected to provide PIB with all coded qualitative data and transcripts, as well as a dataset containing all quantitative raw and cleaned data in a predetermined format and including codebooks and syntaxis, if applicable. This is expected to be submitted with the submission of the draft findings report.

**14.1.3 Data Analysis and Reporting**

* **Preliminary Report and Presentation**: within 20 calendar days from completion of the data collection, the Consultant will share with the PIB’s ‘Swadhinata team’ the first draft report and present the preliminary findings for discussion at a workshop facilitated and arranged by PIB.
* **Final Report:** within 15 calendar days of submission of the draft report, the final report of the overall findings of the baseline study will be submitted to PIB. The report should incorporate specific, practical, and feasible recommendations for improving future programming and impact based on learning from project design, implementation and delivery.

**14.2 Key Deliverables**

The total duration of this study will be 90 calendars days starting from, the date of agreement signing. The time will ideally be distributed as per the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Deliverables** | **Timeline** | **Responsible** |
| Inception meeting and submit inception report | 6 days | Consultant(s)/firm |
| Review and finalize inception report | 8 days | PIB & MJF/ Consultant(s)/firm |
| Understanding, Develop & finalize and translation of tools | 15 days | Consultant(s)/firm/ PIB & MJF /NLNO |
| Approval from IRB authorities, onboarding data enumerators, orientation to the tools and policy and doing field test | 22 days | Consultant(s)/firm |
| Data collection, review and sharing | 12 days | Consultant(s)/firm/ PIB & MJF |
| Submit 1st draft report | 8 days | Consultant(s)/firm |
| Review 1st draft report | 7 days | PIB & MJF /NLNO |
| Submit 2nd draft report | 4 days | Consultant(s)/firm |
| Review 2nd draft report | 4 days | PIB & MJF /NLNO |
| Submit Final reports [Not more than 35 pages] with PPT presentation | 3 days | Consultant(s)/firm |
| Finding sharing in dissemination workshop | 1 day | Consultant(s)/firm |
| *\* The timeline may vary based on the contract signing date* | | |

**15. Mode of payment**

The payment schedule will be as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instalments** | **Percentage** | **Timeline** |
| First instalment | 30 | After submission of the inception report and its acceptance. |
| Second instalment | 30 | After receiving the first draft report |
| Final instalment | 40 | Upon submission and acceptance by Plan International of the final report |

**16. Study Criteria**

The proposals will be assessed based on following criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Score** |
| Appropriate methodology to address the study objectives and realistic detailed work plan | 40 |
| Relevant competency and experience of the team leader and appropriate team composition | 35 |
| Amount of budget and justification | 25 |

**17. Preparation of Proposal**

The proposal will be divided into two parts and should be submitted in two separate folders i.e. technical and financial. The technical part of the proposal should not exceed 10 pages and will contain the following:

* Detailed timeframe (including dates for submission of first draft, dissemination of findings and final report).
* Proposed plan for surveying the projected sample population, with adequate consideration for timing of household/community surveys, travel cost per team of enumerators, supervision of enumeration teams and quality control
* Proposed steps to be taken for enumerator training, piloting/translation of tools, data collection, spot checking, data entry and management
* Outline of approaches and measures to ensure the study will meet international ethical standards for doing research with children in a safe and ethical manner
* Details on the informed consent process considering the situation for both male and female adults as well as adolescent girls, if any
* Team composition (including sex-disaggregation) and level of effort of each proposed team member, if applicable
* Account of experience of conducting large scale survey and relevant studies.
* Name and address of two organisations and name of the contact person to be used as reference.
* CVs of the team leader and key members of the study team which reflect relevant experience to conduct the study.
* Copy of VAT registration certificate (for consulting firm).
* Copy of valid TIN certificate and bank account details.

The financial proposal should clearly identify an item wise summary of costs including:

i. Itemized consultancy fees/costs

ii. Itemized field data collection expenses (including translation costs)

iii. Itemized administrative expenses

iv. Validity period of quotations

The budget should not contain income tax as a separate header; it can be blended in with the other expenditures, as it will be deducted from the source. However, VAT can be mentioned in the budget as per government regulations. The organisation will deduct VAT and tax at source according to the GoB rules and deposit the said amount to the government treasury. The Consultant/consulting firm is expected to provide a justified budget, which is consistent with the technical proposal.

**18. Submission of Proposal**

The technical and financial proposals should be submitted electronically to the email address [planbd.consultant.hiring@plan-international.org](mailto:planbd.consultant.hiring@plan-international.orgg) with the title “**Proposal for hiring a Consultant for Baseline Study under Swadhinata project”** as subject line.

Proposal submitted to any other email account or address except this will be treated as disqualified.

Submissions after the deadline on **17th August 2025** pm will be treated as disqualified.

Two different folders i.e. technical and financial should be submitted into one zip folder with a cover letter. The proposals should be submitted in pdf format.

*‘Any direct or indirect pressure/persuasion/harassment to any Plan staff shall disqualify shortlisted vendors’*

**19. Penalty Clause**

The Consultant/consulting firm is expected to provide services within the stipulated period as well as submit the final report maintaining a high level of quality. If PIB were to determine that the expected level of quality is attained, then PIB reserves the right to deduct 5% of the total agreement amount. If for any reason, the Consultant/consulting firm fails to deliver services within the stipulated time, the Consultant/consulting firm needs to inform PIB in time with a valid and acceptable explanation. Failing to do this may evoke the penalty clause at the rate of 1% for each day of delay.

**20. Contact Person**

For any clarification related to the content of the assignment, the consultant should contact with Md. Enamul Haque, Admin & Procurement Specialist through the E-mail: [enamul.haque@plan-international.org](mailto:enamul.haque@plan-international.org)

**21. Negotiation**

Once the proposals are evaluated, PIB may enter into negotiation with one or more than one Consultant/ consulting firm for final selection. If negotiations fail, PIB will invite the Consultant/consulting firm whose proposal was received and was the next highest score to negotiate a contract. If none of the invited proposals lead to an agreement, Requests for Proposals (bidding document) will be called.

**22. Disclaimer**

PIB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals/applications without assigning any reason whatsoever.

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**Annex 1: Plan International Global Policy Safeguarding and PSHEA Policy.**



**Annex 2: Full Reporting Structure**

The final baseline report should be chapter based following structure not more than 40 pages (final version without annex.)

1. **Title Page**
2. **Acknowledgments**
3. **Executive Summary** (Summary of baseline objectives, methodology, *key pre-intervention findings*, and *recommendations for project adaptation*)
4. **List of Acronyms**
5. **Table of Contents** (with lists of figures/tables)
6. **Introduction and Background**
   * Overview of the Project Context and Baseline Purpose
   * Rationale for baseline study, project theory of change, and gap analysis.
   * Alignment with Project Objectives- How baseline data will inform targets and measure future progress.
7. **Methodology**
   * *Baseline Approach*: Data collection methods (e.g., surveys, FGDs, secondary data review), sampling strategy, and limitations.
   * Data Disaggregation (gender, age-group, disability status, etc.) and
   * *Baseline-Specific Analysis*: Techniques to establish benchmarks (e.g., means, frequencies, qualitative themes).
8. **Baseline Status of Outcome Indicators**
   * *Pre-Intervention Values*: Quantitative/qualitative data for each project indicator (e.g., % of children reporting abuse, community awareness levels).
   * *Disaggregated Analysis*: Variations by gender, age group, location, disability status, etc.
9. **Efficiency of Planned Resource Use**
   * *Resource Allocation Review* (Adequacy of budget, staffing, and timelines based on baseline findings)
   * *Potential Risks to Efficiency* (Logistical or contextual barriers identified)
10. **Coherence with Existing Initiatives**
    * *Mapping of Overlaps/Gaps* (How the project aligns with government policies, NGOs, and local efforts.)
    * *Recommendations for Synergy* (Opportunities for collaboration or avoidance of duplication)
11. **Pre-Intervention Impact Pathways**
    * *Baseline Conditions* (Existing child protection systems, gender norms, and community capacities)
    * *Potential for Impact* (Analysis of how project activities *could* address root causes)
12. **Sustainability Readiness**
    * *Local Ownership and Capacity* (Willingness of stakeholders to sustain interventions; structural barriers)
    * *Lessons for Design* (Early insights to strengthen sustainability (e.g., community engagement strategies)
    * Way to Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) aligned with the project goals and objectives to achieve gender equitable enabling environment for the program Participants.
13. **Summary of Baseline Values for Indicators** *(*Table with baseline values and projected project targets side by side)
14. **References**
15. **Annexes** (*Detailed indicator tables*, data collection tools, *raw data summaries*, TORs, ethical approvals)

**Annex 3: Results Framework of the Project**

**Annex 4: MERL Ethical Framework**

**Annex 5: Global-Gender Transformative Marker & Vulnerabilities criteria's list**



1. The focal point at Plan International Bangladesh will be confirmed when the contract is awarded. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Protocols for enumerators will include guidelines on child safeguarding, adolescent friendliness and gender responsiveness in data collection methods and processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)