

## Terms of Reference (ToR)

### Framework Contract for Research and Evaluation Services under the ASTHA Project (2025–2026)

#### 1. BACKGROUND

**Swisscontact, the Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation**, headquartered in Zurich, was established in 1959 by the Swiss private sector and academia to promote sustainable development cooperation. Swisscontact advances economic, social, and ecological progress by enabling people to successfully integrate into local commercial life. It creates opportunities for individuals to improve their living conditions through their own efforts. With a focus on systemic interventions in the private sector, Swisscontact strengthens local and global value chains. Across its projects, the organisation expands access to professional training, fosters local entrepreneurship, connects people to financial service providers, and promotes efficient resource use—all to generate employment and income opportunities.

As part of its efforts in Bangladesh, Swisscontact implements the **ASTHA (Achieving Sustainability Towards Healthcare Access) project**, which supports the country's goal of ensuring quality healthcare services in rural communities. ASTHA completed its Phase II (2019–2022), which demonstrated the business viability of Community Paramedic Training Institutes (CPTIs) and Community Paramedics (CPs). Building on this success, the project launched **Phase III (2023–2026)**, now operating in 12 districts, with a focus on consolidating and scaling the initiative to bring systemic change and strengthen institutionalisation of the CP program.

The **Community Paramedic (CP) program** is a two-year training course approved by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and regulated by the Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Council (BNMC). CPs are trained to deliver essential healthcare in underserved communities, focusing on maternal and child health, reproductive health, family planning, and primary healthcare. Currently, 46 CPTIs affiliated with BNMC deliver this training across 26 districts of Bangladesh. Graduates who complete the program receive certificates and licenses, enabling them to serve at the community level.

To meet the project's evolving research needs—including annual performance reviews, evaluation of project outcomes, and perception studies—Swisscontact seeks to engage a qualified research or consultancy firm under a **framework agreement**. This will ensure methodological consistency, cost-effectiveness, and continuity across multiple studies, while retaining flexibility to adapt to the project's evolving priorities. The framework will encompass three major research assignments between 2025 and 2026.

#### 2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this framework contract is to engage a qualified research firm that will provide professional services to design, implement, and deliver studies and evaluations for the ASTHA project in a timely and high-quality manner.

### 3. SCOPE OF THE WORK

The contract will cover three key research tasks:

1. **Annual Project Result Measurement 2025** – to assess results and outcomes of ASTHA in 2025 based on the project’s results framework.
  - Review ASTHA’s Results Framework and Monitoring & Results Measurement (MRM) system.
  - Collect and analyse data (quantitative and qualitative) to measure progress against project indicators.
  - Assess key outcomes at the beneficiary, institutional, and system levels.
2. **Project Closing Study 2026** – to assess the overall outcome and impact of ASTHA Phase III (2023–2026).
  - Assess the outcomes and long-term impact of ASTHA Phase III (2023–2026).
  - Evaluate changes in access to healthcare, capacity of CPs, gender and social inclusion, and sustainability of interventions.
  - Collect and analyse data (quantitative and qualitative) to capture the project impact against project targets.
  - Provide actionable recommendations for policymakers and future programming.
3. **Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing and Promotion of Community Paramedics** – to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted social media campaigns on the business outcomes of selected CPs, including income, patient reach, and digital presence.
  - Identify selected CPs and areas where targeted social media campaigns were implemented.
  - Collect baseline and endline data on CPs’ patient flow, income levels, and online presence.
  - Analyse the effectiveness of digital promotion strategies in enhancing CPs’ visibility and business growth.
  - Provide evidence-based insights for future digital health marketing strategies.

### 4. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The studies will be conducted primarily in the **12 project districts** where the ASTHA project has been implemented. These include:

- **Northern region:** Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, and Bogura
- **North-eastern region:** Sunamganj, Sylhet, and Moulvibazar
- **Southern region:** Patuakhali, Barguna, and Barishal.

In addition to these project locations, the research firm or consultant is expected to propose suitable **non-project (control) districts** for comparative analysis (depending on the type of study). The selection

of control districts should be justified based on socio-economic, demographic, and geographic similarities to the project areas and be aligned with the study's methodological framework.

## 5. DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT AND METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Duration of Assignment

01 October 2025 to 31 December 2026.

### 5.2 Methodology

The research methodology and the sample size will be developed based on a discussion with the selected research firm.

## 6. SPECIFIC TASKS, ROLES, AND DELIVERABLES

### 6.1 Tasks and Deliverables of the Research Firm or Consultant

#### 6.1.1 Specific Tasks

The specific tasks **for each study** will include, but are not limited to, the following tasks:

#### a. Inception Phase

- Conduct a thorough desk review of project documents, including the ToC, previous reports, intervention strategies, MRM frameworks, relevant government policies, etc.
- Engage in consultation meetings with the ASTHA project team to refine the research design and align on expectations.
- Develop a comprehensive inception report detailing the finalised methodology, sampling strategy, data collection tools (including pre-testing), timeline, and responsibilities.

#### b. Tool Development and Sampling Strategy

- Design quantitative and qualitative data collection tools tailored to the key target groups, including rural community members and other stakeholders.
- Propose a statistically sound and cost-effective sampling strategy that includes appropriate project and control locations, ensuring representativeness and reliability.
- Ensure that the methodology captures disaggregated data, particularly focusing on women, and vulnerable and marginalised populations (e.g., LNOB groups).

#### c. Data Collection and Fieldwork

- Conduct field-level data collection using a mixed-methods approach.
- Ensure quality assurance mechanisms are in place throughout data collection, including training of enumerators, supervision, and data validation procedures.

#### d. Data Analysis and Reporting

- Clean, validate, and analyse quantitative data using appropriate statistical software to generate descriptive and comparative insights.
- Conduct thematic analysis of qualitative data to capture in-depth narratives, perceptions, and systemic insights.
- Compare key indicators between project and non-project areas to identify attributable changes.
- Assess project performance against outcome and impact indicators defined in the MRM/evaluation framework (e.g., DP Panorama).
- Share cleaned and anonymised data sets in editable formats, covering both quantitative and qualitative data collected from the project and control districts.

#### e. Documentation of Learnings and Case Studies

- Identify and document case stories from different geographic regions, with photographs (where consent is obtained) and narratives illustrating the project's/intervention's impact.
- Highlight key lessons learned, enabling factors, bottlenecks, and recommendations for scaling or adapting the project model.

### 6.1.2 Deliverables

The deliverables for each assignment will be finalised based on the discussion with the research firm and the project team. However, the tentative deliverables **for each assignment** will include:

- **Inception Report** - including a detailed work plan, sampling strategy (with rationale for selected control districts), methodology, data collection tools, and ethical protocols.
- **Presentation Deck** - summarising primary findings, insights, and recommendations for dissemination to stakeholders.
- **Final Study Report** - incorporating all feedback, and including an executive summary, analysis against outcome/impact indicators, validated assumptions, and actionable recommendations.
- **Brief Findings for External Stakeholders** - a concise, visually engaging summary of the key findings and insights, presented in a short report (2–4 pages) designed with infographics, charts, and data visuals. This will be suitable for public dissemination, donor engagement, and stakeholder advocacy.

### 6.2 Roles of Swisscontact's ASTHA Project

Swisscontact, through its ASTHA project team, will support the successful implementation of the study by undertaking the following responsibilities:

- Assist in the planning and coordination of study activities, and provide technical inputs as required.
- Provide a comprehensive list of active CPs along with their geographic locations across project districts.
- Share all relevant project documents, including the ToC, baseline/midline reports, and monitoring frameworks.
- Extend technical support during the training of enumerators and field supervisors.

- Bear all associated costs of the study per the approved budget and contractual terms.
- Offer overall strategic and technical guidance throughout the study, including participation in review and validation meetings.

## 7. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The payment schedule will be determined in consultation with the selected research firm and finalised prior to the signing of the contract, based on mutually agreed milestones and deliverables.

## 8. REPORTING

The research firm or consultant will report to the Manager - Policy and Advocacy, ASTHA, but will closely work with the Senior Officer - MRM, ASTHA.

## 9. TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PROPOSAL PARAMETERS

The selection criteria are divided into two parts:

- Technical Proposal - 70% of the total possible score. The service provider will develop its technical proposal assignment-wise, as per the overall tasks of this assignment.
- Financial Proposal - 30% of the total possible score. Similar to the technical proposal, the service provider will develop its financial proposal assignment-wise, as per the overall tasks of this assignment. It is expected that the budget will vary according to the demands of the assignment.

The bidder is required to submit a technical proposal. It should include the following:

- A brief proposal in the prescribed format (Aptos 11 point, single spacing, no more than 15 pages) should outline the following:
  - Understanding of the ToR.
  - A brief outline of how the service provider will accomplish each assignment mentioned in the scope of the work of the ToR.
  - Resumés/CVs of the experts/coordinators and field officers.
  - Summaries of the research firm's or consultant's previous experiences that would be useful for this assignment.

Along with the technical proposal, the bidder is required to submit a **financial proposal discretely, based on a suggested template (see the template in Annexe 1)**. The financial proposal will be opened only for organisations scoring 70% and above in the technical proposal.

## 10. SCORING CRITERIA

The scoring criteria will be as follows:

Criteria	Weight
Understanding of the assignment	5
Proposed methodology and implementation plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Details and quality (adequacy) of the methodology proposed for the assignment</i></li> <li>- <i>Sample research questions and data collection method</i></li> <li>- <i>Detailed data collection plan and implementation plan (indicating time frame)</i></li> </ul>	15
Background of the research firm or consultant and proposed team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Experience in similar assignments/projects (including assignment/project name, brief details, and clients) and/or in the sector</i></li> <li>- <i>Detailed CVs of the proposed Team Leader and other key team members, and their relevant experience and skills (each CV should not exceed five pages)</i></li> </ul>	20
The efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed work plan	10
Proposal Presentation (organisations scoring 70% and above in the technical proposal)	20
Financial Proposal (organisations scoring 70% and above in the technical proposal and presentation)	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**N.B. Qualified bidders will be considered for giving a short presentation during which the overall assignment will be discussed in detail.**

The following method will be applicable for the evaluation of the potential research firm or consultant<sup>1</sup>:

- A Quality and Cost (Q&C)-based evaluation will be conducted by an evaluation team.
- The bidder achieving the highest score out of 100 will be awarded the contract, provided both parties reach an agreement on the final budget. If there is no agreement on the final budget, then the bidder with the second-highest score will be considered.

## 11. REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND DOCUMENTATION

### 11.1 Required Qualification

This guideline shall ensure uniformity of applications submitted by all research firms and consultants and transparency of the evaluation process. However, the minimum eligibility criteria are:

- Minimum three (03) years of proven experience in development project evaluation.

<sup>1</sup> a) Swisscontact has no obligation to award the contract to any applicant if the proposals submitted do not match the quality and/or the budget requirements of Swisscontact.

b) Swisscontact has no obligation to provide any further information to bidders or any other third party about the evaluation process and its results.

- Preferably, the research firm or consultant should have a broad understanding of Bangladesh's healthcare system and prior evaluation experiences in the healthcare sector.
- Expected to maintain a strong level and flow of communication with the project stakeholders for better assessment of the project.
- Demonstrated ability to produce high-quality study, review, and analytical reports.
- Should demonstrate multidisciplinary expertise and skills necessary for monitoring and evaluation of project implementation.
- Work experience with international organisations will be a plus point.
- Adequate resource pool (human and financial), and ability to mobilise additional resources.

## 11.2 Required Documentation

All competitive tenders require submission of the following:

- A technical proposal (maximum 15 pages) showing understanding of the assignment, proposed methodology (including appropriate sampling strategy), timeline (activity plan), key staff profiles, roles, and individual time to be spent on the assignment.
- A separate financial proposal setting out a detailed budget for the assignment (Tax and VAT must be included, which will be deducted at the time of payment).
- A summary of relevant assignments that took place during the last six (05) years (as annexe).
- Submission of an organisational profile, with the CVs of key personnel who will be involved in the assignment (as an annexe).
- A list of the existing clientele of the organisation (as annexe).

In addition to the technical proposal and budget, bidders must submit necessary documents demonstrating their legal, taxation and financial status. This evidence should be part of the technical proposal and include the following:

- A certificate of incorporation (in the case of individual companies, a trade licence).
- Joint-stock registration certificate (if applicable).
- An organisational organogram of key personnel, inclusive of the names of such personnel.
- Tax Identification Number (TIN).
- Business Identification Number (BIN).
- Other valid papers (provided by government institutions);
- Organisation profile (if applicable).
- Updated Proof of Submission Return (PSR).
- The research firm or consultant has to bear all Annual Income Tax (AIT) and VAT. The total amount of VAT should be mentioned in the budget.
- A signed statement testifying that all information within the proposal is correct and true.

## 12. SUBMISSION GUIDELINE

### Technical Proposal:

- Interested research firms or consultants should submit their technical proposals, both in hard copy and soft copy.
- Please email the soft copies to the **Senior Officer - Procurement** at [bd.procurement@swisscontact.org](mailto:bd.procurement@swisscontact.org), mentioning "**Framework Contract for Research and Evaluation Services under the ASTHA Project (2025–2026)**" in the subject line.

### Financial Proposal:

- Interested research firms or consultants are required to submit a sealed envelope containing a hard copy of the financial proposal. **Research firms or consultants are requested not to submit any soft copy of the financial proposal through email or digital means.**
- Hard copies should be submitted to the address below:

**Senior Officer - Procurement**

Swisscontact Bangladesh

House 28, Road 43, Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

The subject line: "**Framework Contract for Research and Evaluation Services under the ASTHA Project (2025–2026)**" must be mentioned on the envelope and email.

The deadline for submission is **18 September 2025**, before **5:00 PM**. If anyone has any queries, please contact [bd.procurement@swisscontact.org](mailto:bd.procurement@swisscontact.org) by **09 September 2025** with all the questions. Swisscontact will clarify the queries via email on **11 September 2025**.

***N.B.: Swisscontact reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason. Also, reserves the right to select more than one service provider for the assignment.***



## Annexe 01: Budget Template for Framework Contract

*\*Add/change any additional cost heads required for the assignment(s)*

### 1. Staff Remuneration Costs

Position	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Principal Investigator (PI)	/day		
Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)	/day		
Research Advisor	/day		
Senior Analyst-Statistics	/day		
Senior Research Associate	/day		
Research Associate	/day		
Senior Research Assistant	/day		

*\*Add/change any staff cost required for the assignment(s).*

### 2. Training Related Cost for Fieldwork

#### Quantitative

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Refreshment for the enumerator & staff	/day		
Training venue cost	/day		
Training accessories	/day		

#### Qualitative

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Refreshment for the enumerator & staff	/day		
Training venue cost	/day		
Training accessories	/day		

### 3. Field Staff Cost (Data Collection)

#### Quantitative

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Salary (including training days)	/day		
Per diem (accommodation, food, local transport)	/day		
Long travel for enumerators	/day		
Inter-district travel	/roundtrip		

#### Qualitative

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Salary (including training days)	/day		
Per diem (accommodation, food, local transport)	/day		
Long travel for enumerators	/day		
Inter-district travel	/roundtrip		

### Phone Survey

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Salary (including training days)	/day		
Per diem	/day		
Phone bill	/enumerator		

### 4. Travel & Accommodation Cost for Office Staff

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Per diem for in-house quantitative field coordinator & quality officer	/day		
Long travel for the quantitative coordinator & quality officer	/day		
Per diem for the research team	/day		
Long travel of the research team	/day		
Inter-district travel of the research team	/day		

### 5. Data Collection & Processing Cost

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
Phone & internet bills (enumerators, RAs)	/days		
Phone & internet bills (in-house researchers)	/days		
Tablet for data collection	/item		
Recorder for qualitative interview	/item		
FGD refreshment cost	/FGD		
Qualitative data transcription	/interview		

### 7. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Cost

(if needed)

Item	Unit	Unit Price (BDT)	Remark
IRB cost (only if needed)	/lumpsum		