

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Title: Baseline Study and Capacity Assessment of grassroots CSO/CSO Networks for ENABLE project

1. Introduction

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is a development organization anchored in Switzerland. Our vision is a just world in which all men and women determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, sustainably using environmental resources. The promotion of good governance and gender equality, and social equity is an integral part of the overall organizational policy of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, through which we seek to ensure that our organizational culture and practice reflect our commitment to social change.

The **Empowering Networks for Advocacy and Better Local Enabling Environments (ENABLE) Project (2026–2028)** is a co-funded initiative supported by Sida and implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. ENABLE project is a multi-country programme operating in Bangladesh, Laos, and Myanmar. The project aims to strengthen a vibrant, pluralistic civil society capable of influencing local development, environmental governance, climate resilience, and accountability. Across the three countries, ENABLE works with wide range of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to enhance their organizational and technical capacities, support community-led climate resilience initiatives, and promote evidence-based policy dialogue to expand civic space.

This Terms of Reference (ToR) pertains specifically to the ENABLE project in Bangladesh, which requires a comprehensive baseline study to establish benchmark values for key indicators and to inform capacity-strengthening interventions, small grant programming, advocacy planning, and adaptive project management. The baseline study will generate foundational evidence to set baseline data against the project performance indicators and provide relevant critical inputs for establishing the MEAL system for ENABLE project. Similarly, a capacity assessment of grassroots CSOs will enable the project to understand the current status of targeted organizations—their strengths, gaps, systems, and limitations—and inform the development of a comprehensive capacity development plan.

A consulting firm/consultant will be engaged to conduct the baseline study in accordance with this ToR.

Brief Description of the ENABLE project

Within the framework of Sida's CSO Support Programme, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation has developed the **Empowering Networks for Advocacy and Better Local Enabling Environments (ENABLE)** programme, a three-year initiative. This comprehensive programme aims to foster a vibrant and pluralistic civil society capable of effectively improving the living conditions of poor and marginalised people in Bangladesh, Laos, and Myanmar. The programme contributes to creating an enabling environment where civil society organisations (CSOs) can strengthen their influence on local decision-making, development initiatives, public and private service delivery, and policy processes. ENABLE focuses on three key gaps: weak organisational resilience and legitimacy of CSOs, limited strategic networking among CSOs, and insufficient effective spaces for engagement with local authorities.

In Bangladesh, ENABLE interventions will be implemented in two southwest coastal districts—Khulna and Bagerhat. The project works directly with 28 CSOs and six CSO networks, in

collaboration with local authorities, to strengthen their technical and governance capacities in support of inclusive and climate-resilient local development. The project area covers 28 Union Parishads across six sub-districts in Khulna and Bagerhat.

2. Objective(s)

Broad objective of the study is to establish comprehensive baseline values for the ENABLE project in Bangladesh to enable monitoring of progress, assess initial conditions, and inform implementation and adaptive learning. In addition to baseline study, conduct a comprehensive capacity assessment to the local grassroots CSOs and their networks. The specific objectives are as follows:

a) Specific Objectives - CSO Sector Baseline

- Assess the current enabling environment for CSOs in Bangladesh, especially working in project areas on environmental and climate issues.
- Conduct needs assessments covering organisational, methodological, thematic, governance, and advocacy capacities of participating CSOs and their Networks.
- Understand existing levels of CSO engagement in climate/environment initiatives, networks, and policy dialogue.

b) Specific Objectives - Environment and Climate Sector Baseline

- Assess the current socio-economic conditions of local people concerning project intervention indicators, focusing on their living conditions, environmental conditions, and livelihood protection.
- Assess the effects of the environment and climate change on agriculture, adaptive agriculture practices and productivity in the project areas. And determine current knowledge, attitudes, and practices of local community regarding the environment and climate change.
- Assess and document the current capacity, interest and will of local authorities/system actors and communities in terms of knowledge, management systems, assets for adaptive socio-economic development, and environmental protection resources.
- To use the environment and climate sector baseline to ensure that small grant initiatives are context-relevant, evidence-based, and effective in addressing local needs and priorities.

c) Specific Objectives – Outcome Baseline

- To assess and analyse, through a gender and LNOB-disaggregated lens, the current number, types, quality, thematic focus, level of formalisation, and implementation of CSO-led advocacy strategies, as well as to map the scope, frequency, and characteristics of CSO- and network-led policy dialogue events, including leadership roles, stakeholder participation, policy focus areas, and intended outcomes related to policy, regulatory, or practice reforms prior to the ENABLE project.
- To document the baseline status of policies and practices adopted by local authorities and communities, with particular attention to the presence or absence of civil society driven or ENABLE aligned changes that promote expanded civil society engagement.
- To assess stakeholder perceptions of CSOs and their networks as legitimate and effective development actors, including levels of trust, recognition, and perceived influence among government actors, communities, and other relevant stakeholders at baseline.
- To gather sufficient quantitative and qualitative data (gender and LNOB disaggregated) to establish benchmark data against the project performance indicators targeted in the

ENABLE programme logframe and provide relevant inputs for establishing the ENABLE MEAL system.

For detailed draft research questions in Annex-1, which will be finalized with the methodology.

Specific Objectives – CSO Capacity Assessment

- To assess the current organisational and institutional capacity of targeted CSOs and their networks, including governance structures, management systems, financial accountability, human resources, and internal policies relevant to effective programme delivery.
- To assess the technical capacities of CSOs in climate change, environmental management, and climate resilient local development, including their ability to design, implement, and monitor community-led climate and environmental initiatives.
- To assess the advocacy and policy engagement capacity of CSOs and their networks, including skills and experience related to evidence-based advocacy, policy dialogue, coalition building, and participation in multi-stakeholder platforms at local and sub-national levels.
- To examine CSOs' capacity to engage effectively with local authorities and other duty bearers, including collaboration mechanisms, communication strategies, and participation in inclusive planning, service delivery, and accountability processes in the lens of Political Economy and Power Analysis (PEPA).
- To assess CSOs' capacities related to inclusive, locally led, and conflict-sensitive programming, with a focus on gender equality, climate justice, social inclusion, and representation of diverse community voices in the lens LNOB.
- To identify capacity gaps, strengths, and priority needs among CSOs and their networks, to inform tailored capacity development plans under ENABLE, including organizational strengthening, technical and thematic competences, and advocacy in relation to political and economy analysis. This plan will aim to strengthen their organizational, management, and institutional capacities, as well as enhance their advocacy and technical competencies—particularly in environmental and climate change issues—so they can act as independent and recognized development actors capable of influencing local governance and driving sustainable change.

3. Methodology

The consulting firm/consultant is expected to develop an appropriate methodology to meet the objectives of the baseline study and capacity assessment of grassroots CSOs. The ENABLE study is anticipated to adopt mixed methods, cross-sectional design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to establish baseline values, contextual understanding, and capacity benchmarks across four areas: (i) CSO sector baseline, (ii) environment and climate sector baseline, (iii) outcome status baseline, and (iv) CSO capacity assessment. We expect that the study will apply participatory, system-oriented, rights-based principles, and Political Economy Analysis ensuring triangulation across data sources and alignment with the ENABLE theory of change and logframe.

The study will be conducted in the ENABLE project areas across six sub-districts of the Khulna and Bagerhat regions. The study population includes, but is not limited to:

- Targeted CBOs, CSOs and CSO networks (approximately 286 CBOs)
- Selected non-partner CSOs and climate actors operating in the area
- Local government institutions (Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad)
- Relevant Government Agencies and system actors (line ministries)

- Community members, including women, youth, and marginalized groups
- Academia, Media and Private sector

Data collection will apply a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure comprehensive coverage and triangulation across the study components. **The studies should provide gender- and LNOB-disaggregated data e.g. disability, ethnicity, minority etc.**

An **Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA)** tool will be used to systematically assess the organizational, technical, advocacy, and governance capacities of CSOs and their networks engaged in the ENABLE project. The OCA will be administered to all targeted partner CSOs, generating both scored capacity profiles and qualitative insights to inform capacity development planning.

The study will adhere to established ethical standards throughout the data collection process. Informed consent should be obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity of respondents should be strictly maintained. Data collection should apply gender-sensitive, inclusive, and conflict sensitive approaches to ensure equitable participation and representation. The study should uphold the do no harm principle, particularly during community level engagements and discussions.

Data quality should be ensured using standardized, pilot tested tools and well-defined field protocols, supported by training of enumerators and data collectors. Collected data should undergo daily review and validation to identify inconsistencies or gaps. Quantitative and qualitative findings will be triangulated across sources, and key assumptions, limitations, and data gaps will be systematically documented.

Data should be analyzed systematically to establish baseline values for all relevant indicators. Findings from first three baseline components should be synthesized to produce an integrated analysis that informs target setting, programme design, and future monitoring and evaluation. Findings of CSO capacity assessment should be analyzed separately and actionable recommendations should be provided based on the analysis.

4. Scope of Work

The scope of work includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Conduct a comprehensive desk review of relevant documents, including:
 - Project documents and the logical framework
 - Country-specific contextual assessments and political economy and power analyses (PEPA)
 - Existing climate and environmental studies, as well as CSO landscape mappings
- Engage with Helvetas project team members to gather insights on project design, management, and implementation processes.
- Design a robust study methodology (include sampling) that addresses all the components outlined above and develop appropriate data collection tools; ensure relevant stakeholders are engaged throughout the study.
- Recruit and engage a skilled data collection team and organize comprehensive training for team members.
- Submit an Inception Report outlining tools, methodology, timeline, and logistics.
- Complete data collection within the stipulated timeframe
- Analyse the collected data and prepare a draft report; submit the draft for feedback
- Present draft findings to the Helvetas project team

- Incorporate feedback received from the project team and finalize the report

5. Task/responsibilities of Helvetas

Support from Helvetas: Helvetas and its project team will provide necessary support to the individual or firm to undertake and implement the assignment effectively and achieve its objectives. Their responsibilities include:

1. Offering an initial briefing and an overview of existing work to ensure clarity of expectations.
2. Supplying relevant documents and providing technical support as needed.
3. Supporting the selection of areas and key interviewees.
4. Disbursing payments in accordance with the agreed schedule outlined in the contract.

6. Deliverables

- **An Inception report:** An inception report outlining the detailed methodology, work plan, and data collection tools. The report (excluding annexed tools) should not exceed 15 pages and must be reviewed and approved by the Helvetas project team.
- **A face-to-face/virtual kick-off meeting with the project team:** To discuss the Inception Report and adjust the report based on the expectations of Helvetas.
- **Draft Baseline Study report for feedback (Sectoral Focus):**
 - Findings from the CSO sector baseline study
 - Findings from the environment and climate sector baseline study
 - Findings related to outcome indicators in the project logframe
- **Draft Report on Capacity Assessment of local CSOs**
 - An assessment of the institutional, governance, strategic, organizational, thematic and technical capacities of local CSOs working in climate-vulnerable areas
 - A comprehensive development plan for grassroots CSOs to strengthen their organizational, management, and institutional capacities, as well as enhance their advocacy and technical competencies—particularly in environmental and climate change issues—so they can act as independent and recognized development actors capable of influencing local governance and driving sustainable change.
- **Report Structure Requirements (Applicable to Both Draft Reports)**

Each draft report should include:

 - An executive summary (maximum three pages)
 - Background and objectives
 - Description of methodology
 - Key findings and analysis
- **Presentation on the draft findings:** The consultant/firm should give a presentation on study findings to ENABLE project team and relevant stakeholders.
- **Final Report:** The final reports (both baseline and capacity assessment) should address the feedback provided by Helvetas. The final report should be submitted both in soft copy (PDF and Word file) and hard copy (3 spiral-bound copies).
- **Dataset and other document:** Raw and clean quantitative data (if collected) should be submitted in SPSS, voice records (if any), transcripts, and other documents should be submitted.

- **A study brief:** A concise study brief should be submitted, that summarizes the essential information of the study and recommendations. Its primary goal is to convey the most critical aspects clearly, and directly with the project staff, donors and other stakeholders.

7. Timeframe

The duration of the assignment will be 90 calendar days from the date of signing the agreement. The consultant/firm will provide an Action plan that includes detailed timetable in its technical proposal, specifying the distribution of tasks with persons responsible for and duration to complete each task.

The first draft report is expected to be submitted within 75 calendar days of signing the agreement. The final report should be submitted within 15 calendar days after receiving feedback on the draft report.

Regular follow-up meetings will be held periodically between the contracted consultant/consulting firm and the Helvetas project team to review progress and provide guidance.

8. Eligibility Criteria

#	Eligibility criteria	Verification Document(s) required
1	Legal Registration (in case of company)	Copy of valid Trade License, TIN Certificate, and VAT Registration and PSR (Proof of Submission of Return)
2	Proven Relevant Experience (At least 5 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Civil society strengthening, governance, climate change, advocacy ▪ Good knowledge and experience on capacity assessment of CSOs ▪ Demonstrated experience in conducting research and evaluation by analysing primary and secondary data 	List of similar assignments completed + copies of work orders or contracts , or completion letters from previous clients which proves the 5 years of experience . If required, reference check will be done with relevant organizations.
3	Technical and Financial Proposal including the CV of lead consultant	Clear and concise technical proposal along with financial proposal including VAT/Tax

9. Evaluation Criteria

Upon receiving the Expressions of Interest (EoI), a designated team will evaluate the submitted proposals. Based on this evaluation, the team will select the most suitable individual or firm for the assignment. The selection criteria will include the following:

Selection criteria	Score
Understanding of the assignment	20
Appropriate methodology and work plan	30
Relevant competency and experience of the team leader and appropriate team composition	30
Budget – Amount of budget with justification	20
Sub-total	100

10. Mode of Payments

Helvetas will make payments to the contracted party – after deduction of taxes as applicable – based on deliverables and as per the schedule specified below. Deliverables should be submitted to the Project Manager of ENABLE in prescribed formats along with invoices as applicable.

SL	Amount	Remarks
1	30%	Upon acceptance of the Inception Report.
2	40%	Upon submission of the draft report
3	30%	After the acceptance of the final report

- The consultant/firm shall be paid as per the payment schedule. No other cost will be borne by Helvetas Bangladesh.
- All the payments would be made through bank transfer or an account payee cheque by the name of the contracted party.
- VAT and tax will be deducted at source in accordance with government regulations

11. General Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to the present procurement:

- Helvetas Bangladesh reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without giving any verbal and/or written rationale.
- All report and documents prepared in relation to the assignment will be treated as Helvetas Bangladesh property.
- The reports/documents/recording/photographs, or any part, therefore, cannot be sold, used, and reproduced in any manner without prior written approval of Helvetas Bangladesh.
- The selected consultant/firm shall implement the work in close coordination with the focal person of Helvetas Bangladesh.
- Helvetas Bangladesh or its representatives reserve the right to monitor the quality and progress of the work during the assignment.
- The selected consultant/firm is requested to affix the required revenue stamp while submitting the bill.

12. Application process

The proposal should be divided into two sections i.e. technical and financial and zipped in one folder. The technical proposal should include firm's understanding about the assignment, detailed methodology, workplan and brief CV of the team members (detailed CV can be given in the annex). The proposal should specify who will be the team lead in the study as Helvetas will maintain all study related communication with the team leader. The technical proposal should not exceed 15 pages.

The financial proposal should include an itemized budget that aligns with the study's methodology and team composition. While VAT can be shown in the budget, tax will not be considered a separate line item.

Required documents should be presented in English language, using Arial font, font size 11.

13. Proposal Submission

Interested firms/consultant should submit the proposal to procurementbgd@helvetas.org. Please write **“Proposal for Baseline Study and Capacity Assessment of ENABLE Project”** in the subject line. The proposals should be submitted by **10th May 2026**. We are only able to consider electronic submissions. Only complete applications will be considered.

Approved By:

Signature:



Name: Prashant Kumar Verma

Designation: Country Director

Date: 20 April, 2026

Prepared By:

Signature:



Name: Md. Shariar Mannan

Designation: Project Manager

Date: 20 April, 2026

Annex- 1. Research Questions for Assessing Outcomes

CSO Advocacy Strategies

- What advocacy strategies are currently developed and implemented by CSOs and their networks?
- How many advocacy strategies exist at baseline, and at what stage of development or implementation are they?
- What thematic areas do these advocacy strategies address (e.g. governance, service delivery, rights, accountability)?
- To what extent are existing advocacy strategies coordinated, evidence-based, and linked to policy or practice change?

CSO-Led Policy Dialogue Events

- What types of policy dialogue events are currently conducted by CSOs and/or their networks?
- How frequently are CSOs taking a lead role in policy dialogue initiatives at local, sub-national, and national levels?
- Who are the main participants in these policy dialogue events (e.g. government, communities, private sector, donors)?
- What policies, regulations, or practices are most commonly targeted through existing CSO-led policy dialogues?

Adoption of CSO-Driven Policy and Practice Changes

- What policies and practices related to civil society engagement are currently in place at local authority and community levels?
- To what extent have local authorities or communities already adopted changes influenced by CSO advocacy or engagement efforts?
- What mechanisms exist for local authorities and communities to engage CSOs in decision-making processes?
- What enabling or constraining factors affect the adoption of CSO-driven policy or practice changes at baseline?

Stakeholder Recognition and Perceptions of CSOs

- How do different stakeholder groups (government actors, community leaders, private sector, development partners) perceive CSOs and their networks at baseline?
- To what extent are CSOs recognised as legitimate actors in development processes?
- How effective do stakeholders perceive CSOs to be in influencing policy, practices, or development outcomes?
- What factors most strongly shape stakeholder perceptions of CSO legitimacy and effectiveness?