swisscontact

TRACE: Technology for Responsible Accountability in Corporate ESG

Terms of Reference

Engagement of a Service Provider for ESG User Needs Assessment, Factory Pipeline Development and Market Adoption

1. INTRODUCTION

Swisscontact was established in 1959 as an independent foundation by notable figures from the worlds of commerce and science in Switzerland. It is exclusively involved in international development cooperation and has carried out its own and mandated projects since 1961. Swisscontact's working principles include inclusive systems development, learning culture, evidence based adaptive management, and engaging private sector. In addition, the organisation's sustainable criteria comprise of gender equality and social inclusion, financial capability, environmental responsibility, and good governance.

Swisscontact implements the Promoting Green Growth in the Ready-Made Garments Sector through Skills (PROGRESS) project with funding from the Embassy of Sweden and the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh. This project empowers Ready-Made Garments (RMG) factories to navigate the green transition, enhancing both their environmental resilience and global competitiveness.

Based on the learning of the PROGRESS project, Technology for Responsible Accountability in Corporate ESG (TRACE) has been introduced which supports the development and operationalisation of a digital platform for better clarity, coordination, and harmonisation of ESG reporting among the key RMG stakeholders. The objective is to enable the factories in RMG supply chain to streamline ESG data management in line with regulations such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), emerging carbon pricing mechanisms, etc. The platform has potential to support other export-oriented sectors like Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU), Real Estate, etc., empowering them to stay competitive in a global market that now demands strict ESG accountability.

To support the successful implementation, market positioning, and uptake of ESG service, Swisscontact seeks to engage a qualified firm/individual to provide technical support across two key areas:

1. ESG user needs analysis and factory readiness assessment
2. Early adopter pipeline development and market adoption

2. BACKGROUND

Bangladesh's export economy is increasingly exposed to evolving global requirements on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance. International buyers, investors, and regulators now expect exporters to demonstrate measurable performance across key areas, including carbon footprint measurement and reduction, supply chain transparency and traceability, labour rights and workplace safety, and alignment with internationally recognised ESG reporting frameworks. As a result, ESG compliance is no longer voluntary but has become a critical condition for maintaining market access, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability in global value chains.

However, the current ESG landscape in Bangladesh remains fragmented and complex. Export-oriented firms are required to comply with multiple, often overlapping standards such as GRI, ESRS, Higg, SLCP, and ZDHC across sectors, leading to duplication of efforts, audit fatigue, and high compliance costs. Data systems are largely manual, inconsistent, and not standardised, limiting the reliability and comparability of ESG information. At the same time, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face significant challenges in accessing affordable and credible ESG services, further widening the gap in compliance readiness across the sector.

To address these challenges, there is a growing need for an integrated and scalable solution that simplifies ESG compliance while enhancing transparency and efficiency. A centralised digital ESG system with integrated Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) capabilities can streamline data management and reporting across multiple standards, while also connecting firms to a marketplace of ESG service providers and capacity development resources. For such a system to be effective and widely adopted, it is essential to ensure strong user-centric design, build awareness and demand among key stakeholders, develop a pipeline of beta-testers and early adopters, and sustain engagement through strategic communication.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The overall objective is to support understanding user needs and business requirements, suggest market intelligence for customised and context specific ESG system for wider adoption.

Specific objectives include:

- Conduct in-depth user and market need analysis in the RMG sector
- Generate demand and readiness for ESG reporting and adoption
- Develop a pipeline of beta-users and early adopters

4. SCOPE OF WORK

The selected firm will undertake two core workstreams:

4.1 ESG User Needs Analysis and Factory Readiness Assessment

Objective

To generate deep, actionable insights on ESG needs, behavior, and readiness of production facility to inform the system design, services, and business model.

4.1.1 Research Framework & Methodology

- Develop a comprehensive research plan including:
    - Sampling strategy (production facility size, product type, production process, export markets, compliance levels)
    - Tools (surveys, KIIs, FGDs)
    - ESG indicators to be assessed
- Aligning research with the system features and use cases

4.1.2 Production Facility Level ESG Assessment, Gap & Support Analysis

- Conduct structured assessments with selected facilities to capture and analyse current facility-level operational realities and identify persistent and newly emerging barriers, including:
    - ESG compliance practices
    - Data collection and management practices, baseline data
    - Reporting personnel/team structure, competencies, technical capacity gaps
    - Cost and resource constraints
    - Gaps in availability and accessibility of service providers
    - Reporting systems and tools used
    - Audit experience, pain points and expenditure
- Based on the assessment, define:
    - Prioritised support areas required for different user segments
    - What services should be offered to boost user experience, reduce audit fatigue and gain buyer confidence

4.1.3 User Segmentation & Mapping

- Identify different user groups:
  - Owners / senior management
  - Compliance and sustainability teams
  - Technical staff
  - Technicians and machine operators
  - Any other relevant team/personnel
- Analyse digital readiness, decision-making process, willingness to adopt digital ESG solutions

4.1.4 ESG Demand & Buyer Requirement Mapping

- Build on existing knowledge to consolidate and contextualise ESG requirements across key buyers and markets, focusing on:
  - Evolving ESG frameworks (e.g., CSRD, ESRS, GRI, DPP) and their practical implications for the sectors
  - Emphasis on EU, USA, and other global brands
- Identify and validate:
  - Priority and commonly requested ESG indicators across buyers/brands
  - Variations and overlaps across buyer segments
  - Emerging and evolving compliance trends and future-proof interventions

4.1.5 Willingness to Pay & Business Model Insights

- Identify additional value propositions that increase users' willingness to pay
- Assess willingness to pay for these ESG and additional services to ease user experience
- Preferred pricing models based on different user segments

4.2 Early Adopter Pipeline Development and Onboarding

Objective

To build awareness, create demand, and develop a pipeline of beta users and early adopters to ensure TRACE uptake and commercial viability.

4.2.1 Stakeholder Mapping & Segmentation

- Identify and categorise:
  - Production facilities (Readiness level)
  - Clients of the facility (Interest and need)
  - ESG service providers
  - Industry associations
  - Financial institutions
  - Training academies
  - Buying houses

4.2.2 Value Proposition Development

- Develop tailored messaging for:
  - Production facilities (cost, compliance, efficiency)
  - Facility clients (data credibility, risk reduction)
  - Financial institutions (ESG risk scoring)
  - Direct national and foreign Industry exposure

4.2.3 Early Adopter Identification & Qualification

- Jointly develop criteria to identify:
  - High-potential beta users and early adopters
- Engage through:
  - Direct outreach, meetings, sensitisation campaign

4.2.4 Pipeline Development & Onboarding Support

- Create and maintain a structured database:
  - Potential leads, interested users, and users qualified for adoption
- Track:
  - Engagement level, and Conversion potential
- Maintain continuous engagement until the MVP launch:
  - Onboarding, beta testing support, backstopping and follow-up

4.2.5 Conversion Strategy

- Design strategies to convert interest into adoption:
  - Targeting, reducing barriers, visibility benefits, engagement

4.2.6 Capacity Building

- Organise
  - Structured in-person ESG training to strengthen users' understanding of ESG, reporting requirements, and use of the digital platform.

4.2.7 E-Learning Content

- Design and develop self-paced e-learning courses in English and Bangla on core ESG concepts and reporting.

5. DELIVERABLES

Deliverables	Tentative Timeline
Inception report (methodology, tools, work plan and pipeline approach)	February 2027
Initial pipeline database of prospective factories	February 2027
Factory assessment and user insights report	February 2027
Qualified factory pipeline (beta users and early adopters)	March 2027
Monthly progress report (pipeline, onboarding, beta support)	Monthly
Event Report & Documentation	After completion of each event
Final Report	October 2027

6. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

The firm should demonstrate:

- Strong experience and understanding in market research and user analysis
- ESG and RMG sector related expertise, with experience in private sector engagement
- Renowned and well-connected experts in ESG and stakeholder engagement and mobilisation
- Strong analytical and reporting capacity

7. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Interested firms are requested to submit:

- Technical proposal outlining in details the proposed methodology and workplan
- The financial proposal shall be submitted in Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) and must indicate the quantity, unit rate, and total amount. The proposal shall clearly specify the applicable Value Added Tax (VAT). For clarity, Swisscontact expects appropriate budget notes to be provided for each of the corresponding line items.
- Annexes for relevant experience, references and others
- It is mandatory for the bidding organisations to submit documentary evidence demonstrating their legal, taxation, and financial status. This includes:
    - A certificate of incorporation (for individual companies, a trade license), Registration-related documents (trade license, registration with any government entities/NGO bureau registration).
    - Tax Identification Number (TIN).
    - Business Identification Number (BIN).
    - Latest PSR (Proof of Submission of the Return).

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation will be conducted in three stages, with a total score of 100. Stage 1 will carry 70 marks, Stage 2 will carry 20 marks, and Stage 3 will carry 10 marks. The minimum qualifying score for Stage 1 will be 35. Applicants who score less than 35 in Stage 1 will not be considered for the subsequent stages. Detailed information is provided below.

Criteria	Maximum Score
Stage 1: Technical Proposal Evaluation	
Proposed methodology and implementation approach	30
Relevant experience and qualification	20
Team composition with relevant expertise	20
Total: Stage 1	**70**
Stage 2: Financial Proposal Evaluation	
Financial proposal	20
Stage 3: Presentation	
Presentation	10
Total Score	**100**

9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The firm must ensure:

- Confidentiality of data
- Ethical data collection practices
- Informed consent from participants
- Compliance with Swisscontact standards

10. DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT

The assignment will be implemented over a period of approximately nine months, from the contract signing date until October 2027.

11. REPORTING

The selected firm/individual will collaborate closely with the TRACE team, providing regular updates and reporting directly to the Team Leader. Additionally, the selected firm/individual is expected to maintain seamless communication with team members to ensure timely execution of project tasks and adherence to strategic objectives.

12. SUBMISSION DETAILS

Interested applicants must submit their technical and financial proposals separately via email to bgd.trace@swisscontact.org by **02 December 2026**. The email subject line must state: **"Engagement of a Service Provider for ESG User Needs Assessment, Factory Pipeline Development and Market Adoption".**

In addition to the email submission, a hard copy of the technical and financial proposal separately should be delivered to the following address by the same deadline:

Swisscontact Bangladesh Office
House 28, Road 43, Gulshan-2, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

Subject line must state on the top of envelop: **"Engagement of a Service Provider for ESG User Needs Assessment, Factory Pipeline Development and Market Adoption".**

Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered. Swisscontact reserves the right to accept or reject any application, in part or full, or cancel the entire procurement process without assigning any reason whatsoever. Submission of an application does not guarantee the award of the contract.