**Terms of Reference (ToR)**

**Consultancy for Institutional Strengthening and Business Development of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) under Project STRIVE**

**Background and Context**

The Small Tea Growers' Resilience, Inclusion, and Value Enhancement (STRIVE) project, implemented by Solidaridad with support from GIZ, aims to transform the tea ecosystem in India by empowering 50,000 small tea growers (STGs) across Assam, North Bengal, and the Nilgiris. A central pillar of this transformation is the development of robust, self-sustaining Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs/FPCs) that can effectively aggregate produce, add value, and secure better market access for their members.

As of July 2025, the project has made significant progress, supporting over 70 FPOs, establishing 15 cooperative-owned tea brands, and facilitating over INR 330 lakhs in government funding. While foundational training in governance has been successfully initiated by the project team, the mid-term review has identified a critical need to accelerate and deepen the institutional and business capacity of these FPOs. To ensure these nascent enterprises can thrive independently, there is a need for specialized, expert support in advanced governance, statutory compliance, and the development of bankable business plans.

This ToR is therefore issued to engage a qualified external support agency to supplement the project team's efforts and provide targeted, high-level capacity building and handholding support to select FPOs across the three project regions.

**Objectives of the Assignment**

The primary objective of this assignment is to strengthen the institutional and business viability of selected FPOs under Project STRIVE, ensuring they evolve into professionally managed, profitable, and sustainable farmer-owned enterprises.

The specific objectives are:

* To conduct a rapid diagnostic of the institutional and business maturity of selected FPOs to inform tailored interventions.
* To deliver advanced training modules on corporate governance, financial management, statutory compliance, and business strategy to FPO leadership.
* To facilitate the development of comprehensive, bankable business plans for each selected FPO, complete with financial projections and market linkage strategies.
* To provide intensive, post-training handholding support to FPOs to help them operationalize their business plans and establish robust internal management systems.

**Scope of Work**

The selected agency will be responsible for the following key activities, to be implemented in close coordination with the STRIVE project's regional teams:

**Phase 1: FPO Diagnostic and Needs Assessment (Week 1-2)**

* Conduct a rapid institutional and business maturity assessment for a minimum of 50 pre-identified FPOs across Assam, North Bengal, and South India.
* The assessment should evaluate governance structures, financial literacy, existing business operations, leadership capacity, and member engagement.
* Produce a concise diagnostic report for each FPO, identifying specific strengths, weaknesses, and key areas for intervention.

**Phase 2: Advanced Capacity Building Program (Week 3-6)**

* Design and deliver a series of intensive, advanced training workshops for the Board of Directors and key management personnel of the selected FPOs.
* The training curriculum must cover, at a minimum:
	+ **Advanced Corporate Governance:** Roles and responsibilities of the Board vs. Management, democratic decision-making, and conflict resolution.
	+ **Financial Management & Literacy:** Understanding financial statements (P&L, Balance Sheet), managing working capital, and internal financial controls.
	+ **Statutory & Legal Compliance:** Adherence to the Companies Act / Societies Registration Act, ROC filings, and other legal requirements, as applicable.
	+ **Business Strategy:** Market analysis, value chain development, branding, and customer acquisition.

**Phase 3: Business Plan Development (Week 5-10)**

* Work collaboratively with the leadership of each FPO to develop a comprehensive and bankable 3-to-5-year business plan.
* Each business plan must include:
	+ Executive Summary
	+ Vision, Mission, and Objectives
	+ Market Analysis and Strategy
	+ Operational Plan (including processing and quality control)
	+ Management and Organizational Structure
	+ Detailed Financial Projections (P&L, Cash Flow, Balance Sheet)
	+ Risk Analysis and Mitigation Plan
	+ A clear roadmap for accessing finance from banks or government schemes.

**Phase 4: Implementation Handholding and Mentorship (Week 11-16)**

* Provide dedicated, post-training handholding support to each FPO.
* Assist FPOs in setting up basic accounting and management information systems (MIS).
* Mentor the FPO leadership in presenting their business plans to financial institutions and potential buyers.
* Guide the FPOs in taking the initial steps to implement their operational plans.

**Key Deliverables**

1. **Inception Report:** Outlining the detailed methodology, work plan, and timeline for the assignment.
2. **FPO Diagnostic Reports:** A set of individual assessment reports for each of the selected FPOs, completed in collaboration with the project team and the individual FPOs ensuring cost efficiency and adherence to the timelines.
3. **Training Modules & Reports:** A complete set of the advanced training modules delivered, along with a summary report on 10 - 12 training workshops conducted, including participant feedback.
4. **Bankable Business Plans:** A minimum of 50 standardized, high-quality business plans completed, one for each supported FPO in collaboration with the project team and the individual FPOs ensuring cost efficiency and adherence to the timelines.
5. **Final Assignment Report:** A comprehensive report detailing the activities undertaken, challenges faced, key achievements, and recommendations for the ongoing support of the FPOs.

**Duration of the Assignment**

The assignment is expected to be completed within **four months (16 weeks)** from the date of contract signing.

**Required Expertise and Qualifications**

The applying agency must demonstrate:

* A minimum of 5-7 years of proven experience in FPO/FPC promotion, institutional building, and agribusiness development in India.
* Demonstrable expertise in developing bankable business plans for farmer collectives and facilitating access to finance.
* A strong team of professionals with expertise in corporate governance, financial management, agricultural value chains (experience in the tea sector is highly desirable), and community mobilization.
* Experience working in the project geographies (Assam, North Bengal, South India) and an understanding of the local context.
* Proven ability to design and deliver high-quality, participatory training programs.
* Excellent reporting and documentation skills.

**Reporting and Coordination**

The selected agency will report directly to the Project Coordinator, STRIVE. They will be required to work in close collaboration with the state program managers in Assam, North Bengal, and South India to ensure alignment with ongoing project activities and to facilitate engagement with the FPOs.

**Submission of Proposal**

Interested agencies are requested to submit a proposal containing:

* **A Technical Proposal:** Detailing the agency's understanding of the ToR, proposed methodology and approach, a detailed work plan with timelines, and CVs of the key personnel who will be involved in the assignment.
* **A Financial Proposal:** Providing a detailed, itemized budget for the entire assignment.

**Proposals should be submitted to** **procurementdelhi@solidaridad.in** **by 20 August 2025**.