**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**FOR**

**A FIRM TO CONDUCT PROFILING SURVEY OF WOMEN AND YOUTH SME’s**

 **TO IDENTIFY CHARACTERISTICS, CHALLENGES, AND**

**OPPORTUNITIES IN ACCESSING MARKETS AND DOCUMENT**

**ENTERPRISE LEVEL INFORMATION IN THE COMESA REGION**

**AUGUST 2024**

**DEADLINE OF SUBMISSION: 9th SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 15.00 HOURS.**

1. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is a Regional Economic Community comprising of 21 African states’ which have agreed to promote regional integration through trade development and transport facilitation as well as development of their natural and human resources for the mutual benefit of all their people. Its vision is to be a fully integrated economic community that is prosperous, internationally competitive, and ready to merge into the African Economic Community.

1.2 COMESA aims to achieve sustainable economic and social progress in all member states through increased regional economic cooperation and integration in all fields of development, particularly in trade, customs, and monetary affairs.

1.3 The COMESA Treaty under Articles 154 and 155 acknowledges the role of women in the socio-economic transformation, development, and sustainable economic growth in the region. It also recognizes the importance of impartial treatment of women and highlights the different needs, concerns, and interests of women that should be integrated into all COMESA programs and projects. This is also translated into the COMESA Gender Policy (2016) which guides the work on the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment in the COMESA region.

1.4 Furthermore, the Treaty emphasizes that Member States shall take action to narrow the gender gaps and facilitate gender main streaming for meaningful participation of women in regional integration and social transformation and development.

1.5 COMESA with the support of European Union under the 11 EDF Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Market Program (RECAMP) aims to contribute to deepening of regional economic integration in the COMESA region with a specific objective of increasing private sector participation in sustainable regional and global value chains. The targeted value chains for the RECAMP are horticulture, leather, leather products; and ago-processing. The private sector, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), is key to the realization of industrialization in the region.

1.6 One of the activities under RECAMP is that women and youth owned and led SMEs in the targeted value chains are identified and profiled to understand their situation and needs to enable targeted support contributes to equitable and/or equal distribution of benefits under the programme as one of the key beneficiaries.

1.7 In line with this, COMESA plans to contract a consulting firm to conduct a survey to profile Women and Youth owned and/or led businesses in the COMESA Region. The firm once engaged will work in line with the scope of work outlined in 4.0 below.

* 1. **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CONSULTANCY SERVICES**
	2. The review of ongoing programs in support of the private sector and value chain development in the COMESA region indicated that value chain developments are challenged by four constraints: poor production capacity and technology, limited access to end markets and trade, poor value chain finance, and weak enabling business environment. In addition, women-owned and led SMEs face various forms of difficulties due to gender-related inequalities experienced in several forms which include limited access to finance, property ownership such as land and equipment, low level of education and skills, inadequate access to health and other basic care facilities, lack of knowledge, information, and networking in business and markets.
	3. In this regard, this assignment serves to profile women and youth owned and/or led SME’s’ in the COMESA region considering the gender gaps or challenges observed between women and men owned and/or led SME’s. Given this disparity, it is necessary to profile women and youth owned and/or led SMEs in the COMESA region within the RECAMP-selected value chains (horticulture, leather, leather products, and agro-processing) and other sectors employing women to understand primarily the overall status of women and youth owned and/or led SMEs in these value chains. studies in the region have shown that the participation of women and youth in the agriculture and agri-business value chains is low, this is because agriculture and agri-business value chains are perceived to be less lucrative and thus offer less opportunity for income generation.
	4. Furthermore, it is important to document the challenges faced by the women and youth SME’s participating in the selected value chains. This assignment will have a special focus on women and youth owned and led SME’s performance in the RECAMP selected value chains.
	5. All Member States of COMESA will take part in the profiling exercise which will be done in consultation with the Ministries responsible for women, youth, and SMEs, as well as the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) National Chapters.
	6. The aim of the profiling exercise is to develop a database containing information on women and youth-owned and/or led businesses’ choice of sectors and products, their capital and number of employees, different capabilities, and challenges of their companies/enterprises including access to markets including digital markets, finance, information, training, networking, marketing, etc, and business competitiveness in the national, regional, and global markets. The situational analysis needs to capture underlying structural factors that include (legal and policy environment of SME’s in the respective Member States, social status and vulnerability of women businesswomen result of gender and age related stereotypes and challenges); endowments (education and skills including business and digital skills, access to finance and business information and networks); and household level issues such as time constraint including care role of women, property ownership and decision-making ability of business women at the household level.
1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY**

3.1 The overall objective of this consultancy is to conduct a profiling survey to identify a pool of SMEs with a focus on women and youth to capture market sector and enterprise level information, and to identify key constraints and opportunities in the COMESA region.

* 1. Specific objectives are:
1. To identify women and youth owned and/or led SMEs in horticulture, leather and leather products, and agro-processing value chains and capture the status of business including enterprise-level information, access to markets, finance, training, information, and other opportunities at country, regional, and international levels, and key constraints.
2. To identify and document good practices of women and youth owned and/or led SMEs in the horticulture, leather and leather products, and agro-processing value chains in the Member States for sharing with other women and youth SME’s.
3. To create an easy to access national and regional digital database for women and youth SMEs in the COMESA region segregated – accordingly, and according to the value chains horticulture, leather and leather products, and agro-processing. The database should also group the business according to the definition of small and medium enterprises and others.
4. To generate evidence and knowledge on the status and challenges of women and youth owned and/or led SMEs in the COMESA region for evidence-based policy making, program development, and resource allocation; and
5. To propose recommendations for various stakeholders (COMESA Secretariat, Institutions, Member States, Cooperating Partners, and women and youth SMEs to strengthen their participation in the national, regional, and global markets.

**4.0 SCOPE OF WORK**

4.1 The consulting firm will undertake the following tasks:

i. Conduct a desk review of policy and legal frameworks for women and youth-led SMEs in the 17 COMESA Member States (excluding Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Eritrea). Develop different methodologies to conduct field assessment in each COMESA Member State including designing information collection tool/s and engaging national data collectors to survey women and youth owned and/or led SMEs in the Member States.

ii. Engage women and youth owned and/or led enterprises in the 17 (Seventeen) member states using different channels including COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) National Chapters, other women in business associations, Chambers of Commerce, women and youth entrepreneur associations etc.

iii. Consult with the COMESA Coordinating Ministry, the Ministry responsible for Gender and Women’s Affairs, Ministries of SME’s, Ministries of Youth and institutions responsible for SME’s.

iv. Analyse and compile the information gathered from all member States on women and youth owned and/or -led businesses in the COMESA region.

v. Prepare a Profile Report of women and youth-led businesses in the COMESA region highlighting various factors including challenges.

vi. Develop integrated digital databases of Women and Youth owned and/or -led SMEs, and ensure disaggregated data based on various factors, country, gender, age, value chain, and any other disaggregation.

vii. Present the report and database to COMESA Secretariat and Member States and other stakeholders for validation; and

viii. Finalise the report and database based on the feedback from validation meeting.

**5.0 EXPECTED DELIVERABLES**

5.1 The selected Consulting Firm is, expected to lead, accomplish, and submit the following deliverables within the agreed timeframe and budget:

i. Inception report: This will serve as an agreement between parties on how the survey will be conducted. It must include methodology, work plan and timelines and deliverables in alignment with TOR.

ii. Situational Analysis Report of Women and Youth owned/led SMEs in the COMESA Region.

iii. First Draft Profile Report of Women and Youth owned/led SMEs in the COMESA region.

iv. Validation of the draft Profile Report of Women and Youth owned/led SMEs in COMESA.

v. Final Profile Report of Women and Youth owned/led SMEs in the COMESA Region; and

vi. National and regional database of women and youth SMEs in the horticulture, leather and leather products, and agro-processing value chains.

1. **REQUIRED EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS /ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CONSULTANT FIRM**
2. Demonstrated previous experiences in conducting surveys and gender analysis of economic sectors focusing on (SME’s);
3. Solid professional experience with a minimum of ten (10) years for offering and have completed 2 (two) similar project surveys in economic and social programs including processing qualitative and quantitative data analysis in different development programs;
4. Provide details (documentary evidence e.g contract award or reference letter from the clients) of all similar projects and services of this scale or above and complexity and in comparable organizations for the last 5 years or more during which they were completed;
5. Good knowledge of the development of new digital databases, monitoring database performance, interpreting raw data, and turning it into usable data for socio-economic programs.
6. Familiarity in gender and youth issues in trade, agriculture, private sector development, SPS, climate change, and others.
7. Good understanding of the targeted value chains (horticulture, leather and leather products, and agro processing.
8. Good understanding of COMESA regional trade instruments, COMESA Tripartite Agreement, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and protocol on women and youth in trade, and other frameworks.
9. Good understanding of regional, continental and global aspirations on gender, and youth.
10. Demonstrated strong capacity in data management and statistics.
11. Possess good knowledge of all concepts, principles, and approaches required for this assignment;
12. The experience and qualifications of the following experts will be evaluated to award the consultancy firm.
13. A Team Leader with having Master's in social sciences preferably economics, gender, and an MBA. A PhD will be an added advantage and at least 10-15 years’ experience in baseline surveys, and econometric analysis;
14. One Senior Statistician with excellent statistical and analytical skills, database development, and at least 10 years of relevant experience;
15. One Economist /Agricultural Economist/ with having Masters in Economics/Agricultural Economist/ and at least 8 years’ experience in statistical analysis of large profile survey data and excellent skills in report writing;
16. One gender expert with a Masters in Gender and at least 8 years’ experience in gender analysis.
17. Field Supervisors with 4 years of experience in supervision of field-level data collection of quantitative and qualitative nature;
18. Adequate Enumerators with 2 years of experience in data collection;
19. Data Entry/Processing Operator with at least 5 years of relevant working experience. Knowledge of software for database management and statistical analysis is required.
20. CV’s for the core staff are expected to be included in the firm technical proposal
21. **PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

7.1 The Firm shall be paid an all-inclusive fee of $52,500.00 to be paid in (3) tranches as follows:

1. 20% upon submission of an inception report acceptable to COMESA.
2. 30% upon submission of the draft profiling survey and database report and the actual digital database; and
3. 50% upon submission of the final profiling survey and database report, and actual database

Payment terms and conditions shall be as per COMESA’s procurement Rules and Regulations payment guidelines. Payment will be contingent on the Consultant submitting reports specified in TOR’s and COMESA approving the said reports.

1. **PERIOD OF CONSULTANCY:**
2. The selected consulting firm will perform the assignment within four working months from the date of its hiring/engagement.
3. Within 10 days of signing the contract, the consulting Firm will present the inception report; and

The duration may be extended if required with mutual agreement of the parties.

**9.0 ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The firm will be under the direct supervision of the Director of Gender and Social Affairs and shall undertake the assignment with the utmost confidentiality, professionalism and due care. They shall also be required to sign a **non-Disclosure agreement.**

**10.0 DUTY STATION**

The consulting firm shall be based in their home country

**11.0 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF FIRMS**

The firm is invited to provide the best technical proposal. The evaluation shall be based on the following criteria:

1. the overall responsiveness and quality of the proposal.
2. clear demonstration of an understanding of the work to be performed.
3. ability of the Firm to perform the required services.
4. the experience and reputation of the Firm as represented in the response and the quality of the references; and
5. execution programme.

The Technical proposal will have to obtain a score of at least 70% to be considered for the award of contract. The Evaluation Criteria shall be as in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Evaluation Criteria** | **Percentage Points**  |
| 1 | Firms understanding of Client’s requirements | 15 |
| 2 | Approach and methodology (including execution programme) | 25 |
| 3 | Specific Experience of the Firms in carrying out similar assignments  | 30 |
| 4 | Qualifications and Experience of proposed team Team Leader 15 marksSupport Experts 10 marks | 30 |
|  | Total | 100 |

1. **SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS**

The applicant shall submit a technical proposal entitled “Consultancy to conduct profiling survey of women and youth SMEs to identify characteristics, challenges and opportunities in accessing markets and document enterprise level information in the COMESA region”

**online by email, in a pdf format to the following email: *ehara@comesa.int****;*  copied to *smwesigwa@comesa.int**; and* *procurement@comesa.int**.* and an organisation profile*.* Physical deliveries shall not be accepted. The proposal should be addressed to the following:

**Head of Procurement**

**COMESA Secretariat**

**Ben Bella Road**

**P.O BOX 30051**

**LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

**Tel: 260 211 229725 - 32**

**Attention: Estella Hara Mumba**

**NOTE:** The proposal from the firm shall be considered unsuitable and shall be rejected at the technical stage if it does not respond to important aspects of the Terms of reference and/or fail to achieve a minimum technical score of 70%.

**13.0 CLOSING DATE OF THE TENDER**

The Proposal must be submitted to the COMESA Secretariat by email on or before 9th September 2024 AT 15:00 HOURS LUSAKA TIME.

1. **AWARD OF CONTRACTS**

COMESA reserves the right to wholly or partially reject or award the contract to the candidate and has no obligation to award a contract arising from this process.

1. **QUERIES/CLARIFICATION AND REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Additional requests for information and clarifications can be made until three (3) working days prior to deadline indicated in the paragraph 4.0 above, from:

The Procuring entity: ***COMESA Secretariat***

 Contact person: ***Estella Hara Mumba***

E-mail : ***ehara@comesa.int****;*  *smwesigwa@comesa.int**;* *procurement@comesa.int**;*

The answers on the questions received will be sent to the Consultant and all questions received as well as the answers to them at the latest two (2) working days before the deadline for submission of applications.

1. **VALIDITY OF THE BID**

The bid shall remain valid for a period of Ninety (90) calendar days from the deadline for submission.