

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Service Contractor (for companies only) to ‘Mobile’ize Agricultural Extension Services via Interactive Voice Response technology (IVR) to improve farmers productivity and food security

***Note: Please register as a supplier in UNGM (<https://www.ungm.org/>) to have access to the tender.**

1. BACKGROUND

Small-scale farmers in rural Sudan often make production and sale decisions based on imprecise, informal, and out-of-date sources of information, such as family, neighbors, or tradition. Lack of timely and accurate information on best agricultural practices can lead to inefficiencies in the production, harvesting, and marketing of agricultural products, which in turn can affect farmers’ revenues and well-being¹.

Extension services are provided by the State Ministry of Production and Economic Resources and mainly involve field visits and meetings with farmers to discuss farming practices, fertilizer and chemical applications, as well as strategies to reduce post-harvest losses. However, extension services in Sudan have been challenged by lack of facilities and capacities to reach the target groups².

ILO assessment have found that supporting extension service providers could have a long-standing impact, indirectly boosting farmers productivity in a sustainable manner. Carrying out an intervention that systematically address some of the extension services challenges (e.g. limited transportation infrastructure in rural areas), can have a long term impact in terms of improving the link between extension service agencies and cooperatives/farmers to continue to offer/receive quality services².

¹ ILO (2021). *Socio-Economic Assessment: East Darfur and West Kordofan States, Sudan - Sudan* | ReliefWeb. [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/socio-economic-assessment-east-darfur-and-west-kordofan-states-sudan> [Accessed 23 May 2022].

² ILO PROSPECTS, 2021. [Integrated enterprise and market systems assessment on the refugee and host community livelihoods](#).

To that end, The *Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities* ([PROSPECTS](#)), that is funded by the Government of the Netherlands, brings together four agencies (IFC, ILO, UNHCR, and UNICEF) to devise collaborative and innovative approaches for inclusive job creation and education in contexts characterized by forced displacement. The technical assistance interventions are being implemented under three operational pillars: Pillar 1: Education and Learning; Pillar 2: Employment with Dignity, and Pillar 3: Protection and Inclusion.

Under Pillar 2, the ILO is supporting the creation of agro-cooperatives, and the upgrading of agro societies and production associations to better position them for engagement in value chains through multiple interventions that aim to improve their access to finance/lending schemes, build their capacity in improved agri-practices and negotiation, improve their bargaining power, and improve their access to agricultural and market information which is the main focus of this specific intervention.

2. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Evidence from randomized experiments studying the impact of providing free access to a mobile phone-based audio content indicates that it helps farmers to receive timely agricultural information, generates a substantial amount of service usage, farmers change a wide variety of input decisions that ultimately lead to increases in crop yields. It was estimated that a \$1 investment in this technology generates a return of more than \$103 in value added to farmers.

Based on that, the objective of this intervention is to select a private sector company that is willing to work closely with the ILO and Extension Services Agencies in Khartoum and the targeted states (East Darfur and West Kordofan) to create a phone-based extension services platform that improves the Sudanese farmers' access to agricultural production (and to a lesser degree market information). This specifically includes:

A) Develop an Interactive Voice Response technology (IVR) to be a platform that provides audio extension service content to supports farmers in the groundnuts and hibiscus value chains. The voice content is to include relevant extension service audio content as well as occasional market price updates. This includes recording Arabic content and preparing the relevant technology to call 2000 farmers twice a week for 52 weeks. Additionally, the technology should allow: **a)** farmers to dial in to access the content in case they missed the calls, and **b)** push-pull interactions to collect information from the famres (all costs in the first phase to be funded by the ILO);

³ Harvard Business review, 2016. Available at: https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/13-047_155cb6a2-afb5-4744-a62d-929b01fc9e7c.pdf

B) Develop advertisement campaign to promote for the service. The campaign should be of high quality in terms of content and execution and uses advertisement channels that suit the targeted segments (i.e. farmers) , and

C) Develop a profitable business model that enables scaling up this pilot to reach 5,000 farmers after the project end. This is with the aim to improve the linkages between farmers, extension service agencies and the private sector across Sudan (ILO will support the company to create lasting linkages to ensure the content is demanded by farmers as well as buyers).

This is to be delivered, through continued consultations with PROSPECTS project team and ILO Specialists and using a results-based approach. Further breakdown of deliverables is detailed in the Key Deliverables section.

3. KEY DELIVERABLES

A) Develop an Interactive Voice Response technology (IVR)

(Delivery Timeframe: 25 Sep – 25 Nov 2022)

A.1. Technology Requirement (development, operationalization and functionality)

- Under this section the Service Contractor should develop a platform that sends audio content via IVR technology to pre-selected group of targeted farmers that ILO will share their contacts. This includes hardware and software preparations (cloud-based solutions would be preferred);
- The Service Contractor should secure the agreements and contracts with Telecom companies that enable contacting farmers that have SIM cards belonging to any of the three main Telecom companies in the country;
- The call centre will have two sub-services: one on extension services for farmers in the groundnuts value chain, while the other for farmers in the hibiscus value chain. Each sub service should have a short code, that appears at the receivers end. The audio content should also be reachable when dialling the short code and audio quality is expected to be of the highest resolution;
- The call centre platform should be developed to collect and analyse two-way data collection. There should be a functioning and effective feedback loop of information to and from the beneficiaries;
- Secure all needed agreements to push calls to targeted farmer using the IVR system as detailed above, including the two—way data collection system; and
- In agreement with the Agriculture Consultant, each sub-service would include further sub-content. For instance, tips for the planting phase, tips for using fertilizers, etc.

Deliverables under section A.1:

1. Functioning Platform (ideally the system should be a ready-to-use IVR solution that is used in Sudan and not developed from scratch),
2. Agreement/s with Telecom companies are secured to enable pushing audio content (calls) to customers of all three leading Telecom companies;
3. The service code, name in the system, sub-group names and short codes are functioning; and
4. The technology for the two-way data collection is functioning and the reliability of the service is checked.

A.2. Content Requirement (sub services and content per call)

(Delivery Timeframe: 25 Nov – 25 Jan 2023)

- The service name that appears when receiving the calls as well as the short codes to be agreed with ILO project team, operationalised, and tested for reliability.
- In consultations with ILO's agriculture consultant and extension service agencies, develop the content for improved agriculture productivity. This should take into consideration the amount of information that can fit in a one-minute call. The push call to be 2 audio calls per week for 52 weeks. The content to be submitted to ILO in word document and after it is agreed, audio content should be recorded. It is expected that the recording is of high quality resolution and audio voice-over professionals are hired for recording.
- Note: The audio content is to be shared with PROSPECTS team and any proposed changes to be reflected in the final version of audio content.

Deliverables under section A.2:

1. Service name (including for sub-services) are agreed with ILO team and are programmed in the system and are functioning,
2. Extension service content for each sub-service (value chain) is developed. This is equal to 2 extension service content a week for 52 weeks for each service, this equals 208 extension service content for the two sub-services;
3. Quotas for sending the 104-extension service audio content (52 week x 2 audio call=104 audio content), each is 1 minute per call to 2000 farmers (1000 per sub-service) is secured with the Telecom companies;
4. The technology for the two-way data collection is functioning and the reliability of the service is checked.

A.3. Audio calls roll out

(Delivery Timeframe: 25 January 2023– 25 December 2023)

- The calls roll out to the selected 2000 farmers is up and running and all content is programmed in to reflect the farmers' need as per the season (i.e. winter crops tips between December-March and summer crops between April-November). Each audio call to be 1 minute long, 2 calls per week for 52 weeks. Total number of calls is 208 pushed to 2000 farmers.

Deliverables under section A.3

1. Audio content/calls are operationalised and frequency is programmed to twice a week for 52 weeks for 2 sub-groups of 1000 farmer each.
2. System produced reports from the company's systems or the Telecom operators on the actual call received and dial ins the call centre to indicate early interest in the service.

Important Notes on deliverable A.1, A2 and A3.

- The staff skillset and expertise: The team delivering the above-mentioned scope of work should be technically equipped to develop, operationalise and sustain both the hardware and software components of this ToR. Content developers should have the qualification and expertise to develop well-written content in formal Arabic (Foos'ha). The audio content should be recorded by a radio voice-over professional and recorded using top notch equipment to ensure high resolution audio recording.
- Stakeholder engagement: the Service Contractor, with the support of the ILO should ensure that the Public Extension Service Agencies are included in the development and operationalisation of the service. This can include using their branding in the content developed.
- Platform long term hosting: the hosting of this service will continue to belong to the Service Contractor; however, agreements have to be maintained with the Public Extension Services to ensure that content meets their standards and it up to date as per their requests.

B) Develop two advertisement campaigns to promote for the service

(Delivery Timeframe: 25 October 2023– 25 December 2023)

B.1. Campaign aim, content, and key messages

- The advertisement campaigns are funded by the ILO to attract another 5000 farmers to call into the IVR. The aim is to create the first steps for a sustainable business model that maintains the extensions service provision beyond the project timeframe.
- The advertisement campaign can also explore the possibility of providing the service for free for 2 weeks to attract users and notify through the advertisement that they will be charged after the 2 weeks (minute price has to be indicated).
- The campaign will create demand for the service to ensure the sustainability of the service. The ILO will support the company to promote for the service after it has been piloted with the 2000 farmers mentioned above. The campaign should be a series of advertisements that use communication channels that are accessible to farmers. The key messaging will be access to high-quality extension service content all year around, which is expected to increase the outreach of the extension services traditionally provided in the country.

B.2. Campaign development and execution

- The Service Contractor and in consultations with the ILO team has to develop the advertisements and execute them. The plan is to publish the adverts via local East Darfur and West Kordofan radio across two weeks.

Deliverables for section B1 and B2

1. Advertisement is designed (including communications channels to be used). ILO to revise and their recommendations to be included in the final iteration of the advertisement,
2. Advertisement design and recording is finalised, ILO team to review and clear before broadcasting via local radio (or other options),
3. The cleared advertisement to be broadcasted via local radio. The frequency of broadcasting is 10 times per state across 2 weeks in all 3 Kordofan and 5 Darfur States to market the paid IVR service.

Important Notes on deliverable B.1 and B2.

- The staff skillset and expertise: The team delivering the above-mentioned scope of work should have the qualifications and expertise to design an attractive advertisement (using radio or any other proposed channels). Agreements would also have to take place at the local level to ensure the advertisements are aired timely. This entails close follow up from the Service Contractor. All branding requirements are included to be mainstreamed across all the advertisements.

C) Develop a profitable business model that enables scaling up this pilot to reach 5,000 farmers after the project ends.

(Delivery Timeframe: 25 December 2023– 25 February 2024)

C.1. Business model development

- Jointly develop a profitable business model to ensure that the service is demand-driven and sustainable. This to include developing a service to strengthen linkages between farmers and buyers by having a technology to collect information from farmers (systems will be needed to collect and represent data on a dashboard to add value to buyers as an additional revenue stream of this service);
- Once the 52 weeks content is all sent, the audio call to charge fees from subscribers. However, it is mandatory that the company sends a message (prior charging fees) to all subscriber farmers on the end of the free-content period. It is mandatory that un-subscribe code is sent as well.
- Maintain relationship with extension service agencies to ensure the quality of content is demand driven and is at the same quality of the ones provided in the first year under ILO funding.

Deliverables for section C

1. A business model developed that show all component for the sustainable operations of the service. This to include: revenue streams, cost structure, customer segments, communication channels key activities, resources and partners, and most importantly approach to maintain customer relationship.
2. A workplan that includes dates in which the service will start charging fees and notifications that will be sent to all subscribers about the change of terms.

Important Notes on deliverable C.

- The staff skillset and expertise: The team delivering the above-mentioned scope of work has to be experienced in business development and have business acumen on best approaches to maintain a profitable business model in the Sudanese market.
- Stakeholder engagement: the Service Contractor, has to maintain a strong relationship with Extensions Service Agencies to ensure the content is up to date and is aligned with their guides.

4. REPORTING LINES

The selected Service provider will work under the direct supervision of the PROSPECTS team in Sudan and the Agriculture Consultant. This includes regular planning and progress meetings, joint discussions and agreement on best approaches and regular progress reporting.

5. SUBMISSION

The interested service provider/private company (local) should submit **a technical, financial proposal and evidence of proven technical expertise and institutional and financial capacity no later than 8 August, 2022 4pm [CAT].**

The Technical Proposal

1. The technical proposal should lay out, in detail, the comparative advantage of the organization in implementing the aforementioned deliverable and include at a minimum: a detailed work plan (Gantt Chart) for the implementation cycle taking into account the time needed to secure short codes from the 3 leading Telecom companies;
2. Sample of IVR services that the company already owns, this includes sample of content sent to subscribers as well as any advertisement campaigns the company has undertaken;
3. Team/firm profile listing technical certifications of the firm/team demonstrating the relevant experience and competencies to the TORs.
4. A list of the team members who will work on the assignment including gender profile, CV(s) of the key personnel demonstrating competence and qualifications in areas relevant to the TOR.
5. Recommendations/references from previous clients for whom similar work has been conducted.
6. The organization should also submit; a) IVR Service Agreement with any or all of the 3 leading Telecom companies in Sudan, b) Evidence of proven expertise (including: a list of

similar type content service the company owns and c) Institutional and financial capacity to independently carry out the service to ensure it is sustainable and manage funds (for instance, the organogram, registration documents and a recent financial audit report).

The Financial Proposal

1. The financial proposal is to include the following breakdown: the sub total budget of delivering Part A, B and C separately and breakdown by unit (i.e. call cost per operator, radio advert per state, etc.). The financial offer should be submitted in USD. It should include all envisaged costs including content development and advertisement in local radio services of the targeted States.

6. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- 1st payment will be 20% of the total budget and to be disbursed once the contract is signed and an inception report is submitted,
- 2nd payment will be 20% of the total budget and will be disbursed on completion and submission of Part A deliverables. (Deliverable A-1)
- 3rd payment will be 15% of the budget to be disbursed on completion and submission of Deliverable A-2
- 4th payment of 15% is to be disbursed on completion and submission of 50% of Deliverable A3 ;
- 5th payment of 20% is to be disbursed upon the completion of the other 50% of Deliverable A3 and All of Deliverables B1 and B2.
- 6th payment of 10% is to be disbursed upon the completion of Deliverable C.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA

The selected Private Company Service Provider will have a mix of expertise and qualifications in the focus areas related to this ToR. Evaluation of the suitability of the Private Company Service Provider to work on this assignment will be made against the following selection criteria:

Expertise and Qualification

1. The Service Contractor already has IVR service technology that is up and running for other services and have agreements with one or the 3 leading Telecom operators, a functioning platform that pushes audio content/calls to big groups of customers (15 points).
2. The service contractor has an experienced in house team that their resumes reflect their expertise in maintaining the hardware and software components of the system,

developing audio content, designing advertisement campaigns and developing profitable business models in the Sudanese market(10 points).

3. Documents submitted reflect the institutional and financial capacity to manage ILO funds and provide high value for money. These documents to include: organogram, the team's resumes, registration certificates and the latest financial audit to demonstrate the financial capacity of the proposed Service Provider to undertake the requested service provision identified in the ToR (20 points).
4. The sample IVR service content and advertisement content reflect the company's ability to successfully develop a profitable business model to build on the service funded by the ILO (15 points).

Proposed approach to delivery the objectives of the ToR

5. The Technical Proposal comprehensively details the activities needed to deliver the abovementioned scope of work and provide evidence of their understanding of the assignment objectives. This to reflect realistic timeframes of delivery that are realistic for delivering high quality service (taking in consideration the operational risks and impact of the context on delivery) (20 point).
6. Applicants, demonstrate the appropriate approach/methodology to be used to deliver on the objectives of the assignment including any innovation/new idea proposed (20 points).

Please note that the Minimum Acceptable Score for the Proposal to be financially reviewed is 70 points.