

Request for Proposals - Consultancy

Decent Work Risk Assessment in India

Applications deadline: 12 April 2021

RFP #: 2021-April-ASP-INFLRISK

Location: Flexible

Start date: 10 May 2021

End date: 26 November 2021

BCI key contact: Leyla Shamchiyeva
Assurance Manager
tender@bettercotton.org



All applications must be sent by email, to BCI's key contact, with the subject header: "Application RFP DW Risk Assessment in India – RFP n# 2021-April-ASP-INFLRISK".

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (12 April 2021) will not be considered.

Description

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative and the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world. BCI and its Partners currently support over 2.3 million farmers in 23 countries in adopting more sustainable agricultural practices. Thanks to these efforts, Better Cotton accounts for around 22% of global cotton production. BCI works closely with stakeholders all the way from farms to fashion brands and civil society organisations, driving the cotton sector toward sustainability. BCI delivers its programmes through an extensive network of Implementing Partners who engage directly with farmers, building their capacity and driving continuous improvement on the ground.

BCI recognises that agriculture, and cotton farming specifically, are high risk sectors for labour violations and abuse. Through its Decent Work Strategy, BCI is looking to strengthen its understanding of contextual risk factors and drivers of forced labour, develop tailored assurance and capacity building approaches responsive to these risks, and support its partners in development of appropriate mitigation strategies. Field-based risk assessments will be used to better understand risks and also serve as opportunities to identify stakeholders who can work with BCI and its partners to advance the shared objective of decent work in cotton production.

In 2021, BCI launched decent work country pilots in India and Pakistan. As an important first step of these pilots, BCI is commissioning research into the contextual decent work risks in cotton production with a focus on forced labour and child labour. Consultations with key stakeholders on the ground will be essential to ensure understanding of forced labour risks is informed, comprehensive and complete. Key stakeholder groups include relevant government agencies, trade unions, civil society organisations, academics, decent work experts, and, where feasible, farming and worker communities.

This request for proposal is focused on India. Currently, BCI has operations in 8 states: Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, and Karnataka. This encompasses over 1 million smallholder farmers, with the strongest presence

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in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The risk assessment will prioritise these eight states for an in-depth review, while also addressing working conditions in other agricultural or cotton producing states, and the country overall.

Objective

The project objectives are to:

1. Help BCI understand the worker profiles in relevant cotton-producing states (i.e. who is working on cotton farms, where and how they are hired, etc.)
2. Identify risk factors and drivers of forced labour and child labour, including an assessment of higher risk states
3. Develop recommendations for how BCI and its Implementing Partners (IPs) can address these risk factors, including mapping of existing initiatives (such as government programmes, civil society initiatives or community-level projects) and new activities which should be initiated

This study and its recommendations will be overseen and actioned by the in-country Decent Work Coordinator. The work is expected to begin in May and be finalised in November 2021.

Project phases

The consultancy consists of desk-based research and engagement with civil society organisations, relevant trade unions, and (where feasible) farmers, farming communities and workers. Most of the engagement will likely to be virtual.

Phase 1: Desk-based research (7-10 days)

- Map key context specific forced labour risks based on the ILO indicators of forced labour; map risks of child labour and other egregious forms of labour exploitation and abuse. Include an overview of root causes and drivers in cotton production
- Review BCI licensing assessment and self-assessment reports, third-party sources, and interviews with civil society organisations and other key stakeholders
- Review BCI worker profile for risk factors and vulnerabilities; identifying risks due to recruitment practices, migration and demographic patterns
- Overview of the national and state regulatory environment and legal mechanisms to protect workers and victims of labour exploitation (adopted or in the pipeline), linking these to context specific decent work risks
- Identify grievance mechanisms and remediation channels that exist in the relevant states
- Contribute to the development of a remote survey for farmers and workers to validate the most salient decent work risks
- Interview a representative sample of BCI Implementing and Local Partners to understand prevalence of risk factors in their projects, mitigating measures in place, and potential gaps where further support from BCI may be useful

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Phase 2: Stakeholder engagement (10-15 days)

- Research relevant stakeholders and projects in specified geographic areas and thematic focus
- Analyse activities, interest and affiliations of stakeholders working in the sector. Account for any political motivations/power dynamics among stakeholders
- Map relevant stakeholders at local, state, national and international levels. Jointly, with BCI Decent Work Coordinator, develop stakeholder outreach plan
- Interview civil society, workers' organisations, experts in the country and internationally

Phase 3: Findings validation and recommendations (5-9 days)

Develop report documenting findings, approach, and recommendations

- Share findings on forced labour and child labour saliency: Does it occur? How widespread is it? Which forms of labour abuse are common?
- Document labour abuse root causes and drivers, local risk factors and proposed monitoring framework in report
- Recommend actions BCI could take to ensure decent work outcomes, including a country level approach to increase IP capacity on decent work, adapted assurance approach, etc.
- Recommend activities which IP projects should deploy to mitigate risks, e.g. strengthening internal management systems
- Recommend further engagement with partner organisations or local experts, creation of feedback mechanisms with workers' advocates or representatives

For further details on this phase please see next Section "Final report".

Validation of findings

- Carry out a series of workshops (likely 2-3) to share findings and gather feedback, including from the BCI Decent Work Advisory Committee
- The initial recommendations and action plan will be discussed with the Decent Work Coordinator and BCI Global Decent Work Focal Point

The time allocated per phase is intended as guidance only and is subject to change based on the approach and methodology proposed by the consultant.

Final report

The consultant will deliver a comprehensive report which presents a nuanced picture of decent work risks and their root causes and drivers in the states where BCI operates. A key outcome from the risk assessment study will be a clear understanding of the prevalence of forced labour and child labour within the focus areas¹. The report will inform the Decent Work Country Strategy for India and must include recommendations for risk mitigating measures and an overview of

¹ A method to assess whether any of the ILO 11 forced labour indicators are triggered by the information collected is included in Annex B of the report by [BCI Task Force on Forced Labour and Decent Work](#)

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key stakeholders and initiatives BCI can engage with to improve decent work outcomes. The research should cover:

- **Contextual analysis**

- **Labour profile:** State-specific labour force profiles for cotton workers disaggregated by worker type, gender, and social groups which documents variations across states in risk factors and manifestations of forced. The position of sharecroppers and vulnerable farmer groups should be well documented.
- **Risk factors and root causes:** Document contextual forced labour indicators, determine the level of forced labour risk on this basis (through presence of a combination of indicators); document child labour; identify key risk factors and root causes. Document variations across states in risk factors and manifestations of forced labour, child labour or other forms of labour abuse
- **Governance:** Analyse the regulatory framework and rule of law; document and analyse judicial and non-judicial pathways for grievance resolution and their accessibility for the key populations (workers, sharecroppers, farmers, linguistic/social/religious minorities, etc.)
- **Stakeholder mapping:** Which organisations and stakeholders are engaged in promoting decent work and grievance redressal (e.g., trade unions, victims' rights organisations)? What key initiatives are underway which BCI could leverage?

- **Mitigation measures:**

- **Prevention:** What types of prevention activities are likely to work within the national and state-specific context (e.g., farmer training, worker training, black/whitelisting labour recruiters, financial inclusion, community-based monitoring, others) and what are the key considerations needed to ensure their effectiveness?
- **Monitoring:** The consultant will research and document how BCI can reliably and safely gather information on farm labour conditions, evaluating external and internal BCI data sources. Worker voice technology specifically should be explored.

- **Recommendations**

- **BCI:** A clear action plan for BCI and a time-bound workplan developed jointly with the Decent Work Coordinator with oversight by the Global Decent Work Focal Point, validated by stakeholders
- **Implementing Partners:** What measures can IPs take to address decent work risks, drivers, and root causes. This can include participation in research, advocacy with local government, supporting community groups, remediation and rehabilitation, awareness raising and training on decent work, strengthening internal management systems, collaborating with relevant organisations, trade unions, etc.

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Experience, Skills, and Competencies

BCI will prioritise proposals involving collaborations with local organisations (NGOs, academic institutions, workers' organisations) or international organisations with a local chapter or local partner. The project proposal should demonstrate the following credentials:

- Demonstrable expertise on labour rights and human rights in agriculture, preferably in cotton
- Existing contacts in the field, preferably across government, industry, and civil society; understanding on local stakeholder dynamics
- Experience with standards organisations or development projects requiring navigation of complex and/or sensitive issues (desirable)
- Communication skills in the local language and languages of the key community level stakeholder groups
- Proven research and facilitation skills
- Administrative capacity to manage complex projects

High-level Timeline

Phases	Estimated timing	Estimated days
Phase 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree risk assessment methodology with BCI• Desk-based research• Consultations with IPs and Local Partners	May – June	10-15
Phase 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder mapping and consultations• Co-design stakeholder outreach plan	June – September	15-20
Phase 3: Develop and validate recommendations and produce the final report	October – November	7-10

Application

Proposals that respond to this Terms of Reference should be a maximum of 3-4 pages (excluding CVs), and include the following:

- Overview of relevant experience
- Proposed project approach
- Proposed team members, along with CVs
- Detailed and transparent budget, including time allocation and day rates (preferably in Euro) for each person working on this project
- Pricing including any applicable VAT

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In addition to skills, competencies, and expertise, BCI will consider value for money and demonstrable commitment to the sustainability field to evaluate applications.

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

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BCI is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human, and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under the principles and subject to BCI's policies on equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption, and conflict of interest.