

Request for Proposals - Consultancy

Decent Work Risk Assessment in Better Cotton-producing Countries in Africa

Applications deadline: 25 April 2021

RFP #: 2021-April-ASP-AFRA
Location: Flexible
Start date: 17 May 2021
End date: 21 February 2022

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

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (25 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 recognises that agriculture, and cotton farming specifically, are high risk sectors for labour violations and abuse. BCI has developed a Decent Work Strategy that first focuses on better understanding labour risks in our countries of operation, and then working with our partners to proactively mitigate these risks.

On the African continent BCI delivers direct programmes in Mali, Mozambique, and South Africa¹. Better Cotton is also produced in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia through a partnership relationship with a benchmarked standard.

BCI is commissioning research into the contextual decent work risks with a focus on forced labour, child labour and other forms of labour abuse in the Better Cotton-producing countries in Africa. The risk assessment will be a combination of desk-based and field-based research. Consultations with key local stakeholders will be essential to ensure the picture is informed, comprehensive and complete. Key stakeholder groups include the relevant government agencies, trade unions, civil society organisations, academics, expert organizations, etc.

¹ Better Cotton is also grown in Madagascar and Egypt – however they are excluded from the scope of this project due to the small scale of BCI projects in Madagascar and parallel research planned in Egypt

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Objectives

The project objectives are to:

1. Help BCI better understand the labour dynamics in these countries and the risks and drivers of forced and child labour. This will include 1) a high-level risk assessment covering the full set of countries, and 2) a deeper dive to identify risk factors and drivers in the top 3 countries based on risk (to be agreed with BCI).
2. Focusing on the top 3 countries based on risk, develop recommendations to address these risk factors, including a mapping of existing initiatives (such as government programmes, civil society initiatives or local child labour monitoring groups) and new steps which should be initiated.

The project will incorporate extensive desktop research, overview of relevant studies and initiatives, stakeholder consultation (including targeted interviews or surveys with farmers and workers), and [COVID permitting] a sample of field visits. The work is expected to begin in May 2021 and be finalised by February 2022.

Project phases

The consultancy consists of desk-based research and engagement with civil society/forced labour victims' organisations, relevant trade unions, as well as where feasible, farmers, farming communities and workers. Most of the engagement is likely to be virtual.

In the first phase of the study project, the consultant will conduct a high-level risk mapping across all countries with the view to identify high-risk countries for a more in-depth assessment. The mapping will be conducted through a combination of desk-based research and key stakeholder consultations.

In the second phase, the consultant will focus on 2-3 countries identified as highest-risk and provide an in-depth understanding of the local cotton production, labour profile and recruitment patterns, root causes and drivers of forced labour and child labour, and how the risks manifest for various vulnerable groups. This will involve general research and possibly a remote survey amongst BCI partners, relevant cotton companies and farmers. COVID permitting, the researcher will travel to 1-2 highest risk countries for consultations and interviews with key stakeholders, including farmers and workers.

In the third phase, the consultant will conduct virtual workshops with relevant stakeholders to share / validate the findings, discuss appropriate mitigation measures, and identify / make linkages with existing initiatives.

In the final phase of the project, the consultant will draw up the recommendations, present the findings to key project stakeholders, incorporate feedback and finalise the report. Focus and outputs of each project phase are detailed below.

A key outcome from the risk assessment study will be a clear understanding of whether forced labour / child labour are present in cotton production at country level, and to what degree. The study will provide a high-level assessment of the countries and grade them by risk level to enable risk-based allocation of resources to address the risks. The study will also map the key stakeholders that currently work to address existing risks or have the potential to do so in the future. To the extent possible, the objective is to gather information from workers' organisations and other actors involved with farming communities so that it can be analysed against the ILO's 11 Forced Labour Indicators.

Phase 1: Desk-based research and scoping

- Carry out desktop research and targeted stakeholder interviews to understand the risk profile and labour dynamics at a high level (country basis) across all countries in the scope of this RFP.
- Based on this, identify countries in which risk factors for forced labour or child labour are most prevalent.
- Provide risk factor analysis including legal/policy risk factors, governance and political factors, socio-economic risk factors.
- Provide an overview of reported/documented incidents of forced labour and child labour, with a focus on agriculture across countries.

Output: A high level (country basis) assessment of risks for forced labour and child labour across the countries in the scope of this RFP

Phase 2: In-depth risk assessment of high-risk countries

- Conduct an in-depth research of forced labour and child labour risks, as well as drivers and root causes in the 2-3 countries identified as highest risk in Phase 1; explain how labour exploitation manifests in cotton production.
- Conduct research, and possibly a remote survey amongst key stakeholders and producers, to understand producer profile, labour profile, etc.
- Explain labour profile and recruitment patterns, identifying vulnerable groups.
- Provide an overview and analysis of documented incidents of forced labour and child labour.
- Interview civil society members, workers' organisations, and experts, both international and domestic, to form a complete understanding of the risks and eliminate blind spots.
- Capitalise on existing relevant learnings produced by other actors.
- [COVID permitting] travel to 1-2 highest risk countries identified in Phase 1 for stakeholder engagement and workshops (expected duration of 1 week per country)

Outputs: A report summarising risks and drivers in 2-3 countries identified as high risk with a focus on 1-2 highest risk countries

Phase 3: Findings validation and recommendations

- Carry out a series of workshops (likely 2-3) with the relevant stakeholders to validate initial findings and gather feedback.
- Develop recommendations to help ensure decent work outcomes, including a field-level decent work monitoring approach based on feedback from expert organisations.
- Recommendations on further engagement with partner organisations or local experts on relevant initiatives.
- Recommendations on relevant mitigation measures.

Outputs: 2-3 virtual workshops; recommendations that feed into the final report

Phase 4: Report writing and feedback

- Draw up the initial recommendations and draft final report (see below for more detail)
- Present the findings to key project stakeholders (webinar)
- Incorporate feedback and finalise the report

Outputs: Final report; 1 webinar.

Final report

The deliverables will include a report identifying key risks to address, risk mitigation measures, and relevant initiatives. The final report should include the following components:

1. Assessment of forced and child labour risks
 - a. High level risk assessment by country, including methodology used, data sources, and assumptions made
 - b. For the 2-3 highest risk countries, a deeper dive into risk factors and drivers of forced/child labour, including:
 - i. **Labour profile:** overview of the labour profile and recruitment patterns, including by working duration, gender, recruitment channel, migration status, etc. Sharecroppers and vulnerable farmer groups should be included as well. Ensure that differences in experience between male and female workers are captured as well as among different ethnic/linguistic, social, and religious groups, etc.
 - ii. **Root causes and drivers:** Country and regional variations of root causes captured: Forced labour and other labour concerns should be profiled carefully according to the different production contexts, locations, and scenarios in which they arise, with a focus on how different root causes affect different categories of vulnerable workers, smallholder, and sharecropper farmers.
 - iii. **Relevant forced labour and child labour indicators:** Based on research and interview findings, develop an estimate of the prevalence of forced and

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child labour indicators in higher risk countries. How does forced labour and child labour manifest in practice? How widespread is it?

2. An overview of current decent work initiatives and risk-mitigation strategies already in place (related to cotton farming), with a focus on the 2-3 highest risk regions as identified in part This will include:
 - a. **Stakeholder mapping:** Which organisations and stakeholders are engaged in promoting decent work? What key initiatives are underway?
 - b. **Risk mitigation:** What types of prevention activities are likely to work within the national 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 that these approaches work effectively?
3. Recommendations for BCI and its partners on how to best mitigate and address the risk factors identified in parts 1 and 2; including a 3-5 year high-level action plan to strengthen decent work principles at field level in the highest risk regions.

Experience, Skills, and Competencies

Given the geographic and contextual diversity of the cotton-producing countries in Africa and complex operating environment, BCI is seeking a qualified, multi-lingual (anglo- and francophone) multi-disciplinary team of researchers with expert understanding of the contexts and local dynamics. Organisations with regional presence, local partners or affiliates are encouraged to apply:

- Prior experience conducting analyses and assessments of decent work risks in the relevant countries.
- Ability to conduct original research in French and English languages. Capabilities in other local languages desirable.
- Expertise in forced labour and child labour and understanding their manifestations in agriculture and preferably in cotton production.
- Demonstrable research and facilitation skills.
- Administrative capacity to manage complex projects and deliver high quality outcomes on time.

High-level estimated timeline

This is indicative only and is subject to change based on the consultants' proposed approach.

Phases	Estimated timing	Estimated days
Phase 1: high level risk assessment of CmiA countries of operation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree risk assessment methodology with BCI• High-level country risk assessment	Apr - May	7-10
Phase 2: Deeper dive on risk factors and drivers in high-risk countries	May - Jul	15-20 (up to 30 with travel)

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Phases	Estimated timing	Estimated days
Phase 3: Develop and validate recommendations	Aug - Sep	7-10
Phase 4: Develop and finalise report	Oct – Nov	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 names, along with CVs (in the Annex)
- 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

The total budget available for this research is €50,000 including travel, or €43,000 without travel. Proposals will be evaluated based on value for money as well as overall quality.

All applications must be submitted by email, headed “Application RFP Forced labour review – RFP # 2021-April-ASP-AFRA” addressed to Leyla Shamchiyeva at tender@bettercotton.org.

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

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.