

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Development of training and information materials for capacity building of management and staff of cotton-textile clusters in Uzbekistan

RFP n#: 2025-12-PR-GENDERMATUZ
Location: Uzbekistan
Start date: To be mutually agreed on contract signing
End date: 20th March 2026
(or as near to as possible)

Better Cotton Initiative key contact:

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Decent Work Coordinator

All applications must be submitted via this [form](#).



You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org - RFP n# 2025-12-PR-GENDERMATUZ until 5th January 2026, noting that the **final submission deadline for bids is the 12th January 2026**.

Please note that the responses over the Christmas and new year period may be delayed, however we will endeavour to work on these as quickly as possible.

Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Important Submission Process Information:

After submitting your details through the [form](#), you will receive a separate email to upload your supporting documents to a secure platform.

Description

Better Cotton Initiative is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In difficult times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.9 million cotton farmers in 26 countries. More than a fifth of the world's cotton is now grown

under the Better Cotton Initiative Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

A critical component of the Better Cotton Initiative Standard System is the Better Cotton Initiative Principles and Criteria (P&C), which lay out the global definition of Better Cotton Initiative through six guiding principles and 2 cross-cutting priorities. By following these principles, Better Cotton Initiative Farmers produce cotton in a way that is better for themselves, their communities and the environment.

The 6 principles are: Management, Natural Resources, Crop Protection, Fibre Quality, Decent Work and Sustainable Livelihoods. The 2 cross-cutting priorities are: Gender Equality and Climate Change.

Better Cotton's assurance programme verifies that producers have met the P&C Indicators of the Better Cotton Initiative Principles and Criteria before they are certified to sell Better Cotton. Further, once certified, producers are supported to continue to make progress against their continuous improvement priorities and receive adequate capacity strengthening support.

More information about BCI can be found on our website: www.bettercotton.org

BACKGROUND

After years of well-documented issues of systemic forced labour, Uzbekistan's government, International Labour Organization (ILO), Cotton Campaign, civil society institutions and human rights activists have been successful in driving state-led labour reforms in Uzbekistan's cotton industry. As a result, Uzbekistan has eliminated systemic child labour and forced labour in its cotton sector, according to ILO findings.

Following the large-scale reform of the cotton sector, Better Cotton Initiative launched a formal programme in Uzbekistan in 2022 and subsequently established a branch in Tashkent in May 2023.

Building on this momentum, the Better Cotton Initiative Programme has supported continuous improvements in environmental, social, and economic practices within the cotton industry. As the world's sixth-largest cotton producer, Uzbekistan presents a unique opportunity to embed sustainability and responsible labour practices—including gender equality—at scale.

Gender equality, as a cross-cutting priority within the Better Cotton Initiative Standard, is integrated throughout various principles and practices—including decent work, training, decision-making, and farm management. Ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities, voice, and protection across the cotton supply chain is essential for achieving social sustainability and strengthening inclusive labour systems.

While progress has been made in promoting fair labour practices across the cotton sector globally, creating truly gender-responsive working environments remain a challenge. Women are often underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles, have limited access to training and advancement opportunities, and may face gender-based discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Addressing these barriers is essential to advancing social

sustainability and aligning with international labour and human rights standards, including those upheld by Better Cotton Initiative.

In Uzbekistan, these challenges are particularly evident at the **farm and cluster level**, where daily management practices directly affect hundreds of thousands of permanent and **seasonal workers**, many of whom are women. Seasonal workers—who make up a significant portion of the labour force during peak agricultural periods—often have the least access to information, training, and grievance mechanisms, making them more vulnerable to gender-based discrimination, unequal pay, or unsafe working conditions. Strengthening gender-responsive approaches among cluster managers, farm administrators, and local agronomy and labour teams is therefore critical to ensuring equitable and safe working environments.

To address these gaps, Better Cotton Initiative seeks to develop practical, accessible, and context-specific gender-focused training and guidance materials tailored for:

- Cotton cluster managers and senior staff
- Farm-level management teams
- Field facilitators and agronomists
- Permanent workers
- Seasonal workers involved in harvesting and field operations
- **Designated Gender Leader or Gender Committee responsible for overseeing gender equality implementation**

We invite qualified specialists and organizations to support this effort by developing training and guidance materials that will enhance gender awareness, promote inclusive practices, and strengthen the capacity of farm and field teams to implement the Better Cotton Standard in a gender-responsive manner.

Scope of work

The consultant will develop **practical, context-relevant gender-focused training and guidance materials** for cotton cluster managers, farm-level staff, permanent and seasonal workers, as well as for the Designated Gender Leader or Gender Committee responsible for overseeing gender equality implementation. **The training itself will be conducted by Better Cotton Initiative Uzbekistan staff for all the above-mentioned personnel.** The materials should be tailored to the operational realities of Uzbekistan's cotton sector and aligned with national legislation and the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria v3.1.

Training of BCI Staff: The consultant will provide a dedicated session (or selected parts) of the developed training to BCI Uzbekistan staff. This will ensure that BCI staff are familiar with the content, understand the training materials, and are prepared to support delivery on the ground. This “training-of-trainers” session is an integral part of the consultant's responsibilities.

Training and guidance materials development

- Consultations with women workers, clusters and stakeholders (Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction, Family and Women's Committee, trade unions,

etc.) to develop tailored training materials adapted to the needs of cotton clusters and their workers.

- The consultant is expected to have consultations with women workers in a most suitable way to understand their day to day work experience, including any women-specific issues that may have an impact on attendance, retention, efficiency, fairness, safety, health, childcare support, wages. Right estimation of their work etc. The consultant is expected to create a safe space for discussions with women and understand areas of improvement if any
- Development of comprehensive training materials that explain the requirements of Better Cotton Initiative Principles & Criteria V3.1 – with a particular focus on the Cross-Cutting Priority: Gender Equality (Criteria and Indicators) and that take into account the relevant provisions of national legislation. The materials should also include gender-related aspects contained in other Better Cotton Initiative principles and criteria, where applicable.
- Development of specific guidance materials (local instructions, policies, list of requirements etc.) to help clusters integrate gender equality into all employment practices in cotton farming, including clear requirements for non-discriminatory recruitment, equal access to job opportunities, and safe, inclusive working conditions for both women and men.
- Training and guidance materials should be tailored to the specific target groups, including cluster management and all employees, with particular consideration for field workers.

Content Coverage for Training materials should cover the following thematic areas:

1. Gender Policy and Regulatory Requirements

- Overview of national labour and gender equality legislation relevant to agricultural employment.
- Requirements of the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria related to gender equality, non-discrimination, Decent Work, and worker representation.
- Comparison table of Better Cotton Initiative P&C requirements with national legislation requirements
- Roles and responsibilities of cluster management and farm-level teams in meeting these requirements

2. Understanding Local Gender Dynamics

- Raising awareness of gender norms, roles, and barriers in rural communities and within cotton production systems.
- Identification of gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities for permanent and seasonal workers, including informal hiring, lack of contracts, unequal pay, limited access to training, and barriers to promotion.
- Practical examples of how gender inequalities appear during farm operations, recruitment, supervision, training delivery, and worker management.

3. Roles, Responsibilities, and Institutional Arrangements

- Clear definition of gender-related responsibilities within the cluster and farm management structures.

- Guidance on establishing or strengthening a Gender Committee or appointing designated gender focal points.
- Selection criteria, core tasks, authority levels, and collaboration pathways for gender-responsible staff.
- Effective cooperation with the Senior Gender Specialist and other relevant BCI-related structures.

4. Consultation, Participation, and Stakeholder Engagement

- Practical methods for consulting women workers, community members, and other vulnerable groups.
- Tools for organizing regular feedback sessions, discussions, or small meetings with women and seasonal workers.
- Approaches for engaging local stakeholders, including Women's Committees, labour inspectors, makhalla authorities, NGOs, and community representatives to identify gender-related challenges and opportunities.

5. Recruitment, Employment, and Workplace Practices

- Good practices for fair and safe recruitment of women and vulnerable groups, including seasonal labourers.
- Measures to ensure equal access to contracts, wages, training, grievance mechanisms, and career advancement.
- Approaches to prevent and address discriminatory behaviour, harassment, and unsafe working conditions.

6. Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring

- Guidance on mandatory documentation: complaint forms, incident reporting templates, gender-disaggregated data collection, and basic monitoring tools.
- Guidance on tracking gender-related incidents and follow-up actions.
- Requirements for integrating gender equality actions into cluster management plans, training programs, and annual reporting.

7. Practical Action Tools and Good Practices

- Simple, actionable steps and examples that clusters and farms can implement immediately to promote equal opportunities.
- Suggested low-cost interventions for improving women's participation, safety, access to training, and engagement in decision-making.
- Good practices for inclusive training, delivery and communication adapted to literacy levels and seasonal workers' schedules.

Training Modules and Content To ensure clarity and practical applicability, the 7 thematic areas outlined in the RFP will be consolidated into 4 logical modules for a half-day (5-hour) training session:

Module 1: Policy, Regulatory Requirements and BCI Principles (60 min) Overview of national labour and gender equality legislation BCI P&C requirements on Gender Equality, Decent Work, non-discrimination Roles and responsibilities of cluster management and farm-level teams

Module 2: Local Gender Dynamics and Worker Vulnerabilities (70 min) Gender norms, roles, and barriers in rural communities, importance of women's work in cotton supply chain and that the work they do is equally important as men, Gender-specific risks for permanent and seasonal workers
Practical examples in recruitment, supervision, and training delivery

Module 3: Institutional Arrangements and Stakeholder Engagement (60 min) Gender responsibilities within cluster and farm management Gender Committees and designated focal points Engaging women workers, communities, and local authorities

Module 4: Workplace Practices, Monitoring, and Practical Tools (70 min) Fair recruitment, equal access to contracts, wages, and training Preventing harassment and unsafe working conditions Documentation, reporting, monitoring, actionable steps for inclusive practices

Breaks: 2 x 10 min Total Duration: 5 hours

The training content should have activities integrated so that the trainees also have a chance of active participation and reflection during the training in a manner that's possible. For example, picture based discussions, reflection on a movie or a small advertisement or an activity that everyone can do together. The content should be engaging, helping people to retain the information that they receive. And the training content should be informed by the stakeholder consultation – including the women workers.

Content Coverage for guidance documents must comprehensively address the following key topics:

- Key Requirements of National Legislation on Gender Equality
- Recommendations for Effective Implementation of Gender Equality Practices
- Comparative table of Better Cotton Initiative principles and criteria with national legislation requirements, including legal obligations and penalties for non-compliance with a detailed list of fines and sanctions.
- Draft Action Plan for 3 years with actionable steps and examples that clusters and farms can implement in the short and medium term to promote equal opportunities

Content Requirements

The training materials and accompanying guidance documents must adhere to the following specifications to ensure clarity, accessibility, and compliance with relevant criteria:

1. Expected Deliverables / Outputs

The consultant is expected to provide the following outputs:

- Draft and final gender-focused training materials (PowerPoint deck, max 35 slides)
- Guidance documents (max 10 pages each) include policies, local instructions, and practical steps for integrating gender equality into cotton farming employment practices.
- Draft and final 3-year Action Plan (max 10 pages) with monitoring templates for gender equality measures.
- Summary report of consultations with clusters and stakeholders for contextual adjustments to training and guidance materials.

2. Language and Accessibility:

- All training materials and guidance documents must be developed in Uzbek and Russian to ensure accessibility for all target audiences.

- Technical translation to English is required
 - Content should be written in clear and straightforward language to facilitate easy comprehension by cluster management and employees, regardless of their level of familiarity with legal and technical terminology.

These requirements aim to create effective, user-friendly, and legally compliant training materials that support knowledge transfer and regulatory adherence within the cotton sector.

High-level Timeline

INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	
5th January 2026	Questions deadline (Usually one week before the Applications deadline) All questions must be sent only to tender@bettercotton.org with the RFP Reference in the Subject line.
12th January 2026 (6.00pm Tashkent Time)	Applications deadline All applications must be submitted via this link before 6.00pm Tashkent Time on Monday 12 th January 2026
12 – 16 January 2026	Evaluation of submitted applications
Until January 16, 2026	The successful applicant(s) will be notified
Until January 19, 2026	Service contract(s) issued
KEY DELIVERABLES – indicative dates below to be agreed during contracting process	
Until February 23, 2026	Consultation with stakeholders and provision of draft training materials to Better Cotton Initiative for advice on contextual adjustments.
Until March 2, 2026	Receiving comments from the Better Cotton Initiative Team on the training and information materials developed.
Until March 6, 2026	Providing the Better Cotton Initiative Uzbekistan Team with the final version of training and information materials.

Consultants Qualifications

It is expected that the consulting company or group will have the legal right to develop training materials in Uzbekistan and that it will be composed of specialists with extensive experience in the country.

The combined expertise and experience of the core team members, listed in the proposal, should include:

Essential Qualifications

- Advanced university degree in gender studies, social sciences, labour studies, agriculture, rural development, human rights, or a related field.
- Minimum 5 years of demonstrated professional experience in gender equality, women's empowerment, or social inclusion programming.
- Proven experience in developing training materials, guidance tools, or capacity-building resources for diverse user groups (managers, field staff, workers).
- Strong understanding of labour rights, Decent Work, and gender-related risks in agricultural supply chains, preferably in cotton or similar crops.
- Demonstrated experience working in Central Asia, preferably Uzbekistan, including knowledge of cultural norms, rural contexts, and institutional arrangements.
- Familiarity with international labour standards, ILO conventions, and gender mainstreaming frameworks.
- Ability to design materials suited for different literacy levels, including seasonal and low-skilled workers.

Desirable Qualifications:

- Prior experience working with Better Cotton, other sustainability standards, certification schemes, or responsible sourcing programs.
- Experience with gender-related assessments or training in agriculture, rural communities, or labour-intensive industries.
- Practical knowledge of national legislation, especially labour law, gender equality provisions, and occupational safety standards.
- Experience collaborating with local authorities, Women's Committees, NGOs, or farmer organizations.
- Bilingual capacity: materials must be produced in Uzbek and Russian (either directly or through professional translation oversight).
- Experience producing materials that include visual aids, case studies, practical checklists, and other user-friendly learning tools.

Skills and Competencies:

- Strong analytical and instructional design skills, with the ability to translate technical gender concepts into practical, actionable guidance.
- Ability to communicate complex topics in clear and accessible language adapted to field-level audiences.
- Proven ability to deliver high-quality outputs within agreed timelines.

Application Requirements

Proposals responding to this Request for Proposals should be a maximum of 10 pages (excluding CVs), and include the following:

1. Overview of relevant experience
2. Proposed methodology and timeline
3. Detailed and transparent budget, in EUROS, including time allocation, travel cost and day rates

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

Better Cotton Initiative 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.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach and methodology
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed consultant(s)
- Quality and relevance of the sample work submitted

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money
- Adherence to the available budget