

Terms of Reference

Subject: Project's Final Evaluation

Project: AHEAD Bangladesh

1. Purpose

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) (hereafter: the “Evaluation commissioner”) is recruiting a Consultant or team of consultants (hereafter: the “Evaluator”) to conduct an external evaluation of the AHEAD Bangladesh project (hereafter: the ‘Project’), aimed at supporting national stakeholders - in particular civil society actors and political parties - to participate meaningfully in the electoral process as independent election observers, as candidates or newly elected representatives, or in enhancing civic and voter education particularly for the youth. Overall, the project aimed at enhancing the inclusion of underrepresented groups like women, youth, national minorities, and persons with disabilities, and at minimising the risk of electoral violence.

The evaluation is set to take place between September and December 2026. The evaluation should assess the extent to which the project contributed to strengthening Bangladesh’s democratic ecosystem during a critical electoral period. The primary users of the analysis will be EPD and its consortium partners as well as the European Union Delegation (EUD) in Bangladesh, with lessons learned to be shared with AHEAD Bangladesh affiliated entities and national beneficiaries.

The evaluation will have two main purposes:

- **Learning.** Given the advanced stage of implementation of the projects’ activities, the Consortium aims to assess learning and progress across the entire project, while extracting lessons for future electoral support programming (at project level and organisational level) in a transitional political environment. Therefore, the evaluation will be structured with key evaluation questions whose answer will result in the production of a comprehensive and consolidated evaluation report at the end of the project.

- **Accountability.** The evaluation must ascertain the degree to which the project has attained the overall and specific objectives established in the Description of the Action (DoA) and Logical Framework Matrix annexed to the contract with the donor.

2. Background information about the project

AHEAD Bangladesh is an 18-month project aimed at supporting inclusive and transparent elections, strengthens civil society participation, promotes political pluralism and accountability, and addresses persistent challenges such as marginalisation and limited access to reliable information. Within this framework, AHEAD Bangladesh aims to support civil society and political actors before, during, and after the electoral period. The initiative is implemented by a consortium led by the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), with co-beneficiaries JAAGO Foundation Trust and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), along with other EPD members (Democracy Reporting International-DRI, EDGE Foundation, and [Election-Watch.EU](#)).

- EPD coordinated the project, represented it vis-à-vis the donor and community of development partners, liaised with the EU EOM and other international observer missions, and made its findings available for a broader audience.
- EPD led a comprehensive effort to rebuild and professionalise a number of citizen election observer groups around the 12 February 2026 elections. This included administrative and financial support (grants), technological support as well as capacity building and guidance in the areas of election observation methodology, reporting and public communications, recommendations, and organisational development, among others. In this effort, EPD was assisted by its member organisations EDGE Foundation and Election-Watch.EU as affiliated entities in the project. The four FSTP streams are: general observation, thematic/ inclusion focused observation, Sample-based observation pilot, and coalition building support.
- EPD also collaborated with national entity Digitally Right Limited (DRL) and its member organisation Democracy Reporting International (DRI) in the area of disinformation monitoring.
- JAAGO developed a nationwide digital civic and voter education and sensitisation campaign (including a chatbot) particularly dedicated to women and youth, a cascade training model, engaging young facilitators and beneficiaries across all administrative divisions and electoral constituencies down to community level, organised youth-based community action projects and division-level debates with political parties and candidates. Also, through social media channels, deployed a nationwide on electoral awareness and why voting matters contents, sensitizing the population through digital mediums.
- NIMD conducted a baseline assessment among political parties, national-level multiparty dialogue sessions, awareness-raising on the electoral and political party regulatory framework, electoral preparedness trainings for political parties and women candidates, induction and mentorship for new parliamentary actors, and informal advocacy for youth and women leadership within political parties.

3. Evaluation modalities

a. Methodological design

The evaluation constitutes a full project evaluation conducted during and after implementation. The evaluation is designed to be structured so that findings can inform the implementation of future similar interventions.

The evaluation shall answer the following core questions, aligned with the OECD DAC criteria.

Several proposed questions require a “deep dive” into specific activity clusters (ESF¹, JAAGO, NIMD) and must be addressed with dedicated evidence collection and analysis.

It is expected that these core questions will be refined, merged, or selected by the Evaluation Team in consultation with project stakeholders during the Inception phase to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and contextually grounded before data collection begins.

- **Relevance**

- How relevant was the project and its design in the context of Bangladesh’s 2026 transitional election?
- How well did the project’s specific interventions respond to the actual needs and priorities of the target groups (citizen election observers, youth, political parties), and how effectively did it adapt as those needs evolved?
- Did the intervention reflect the needs of under-represented groups like women, youth, national minorities, and persons with disabilities? To what extent did the project remain responsive to the rapidly evolving political and electoral environment?

- **Effectiveness**

- Were the intended results, planned outcomes and outputs achieved?
- **Specific Deep Dive (ESF):** To what extent did the project contribute to the re-establishment and professionalisation of independent citizen election observation? Specifically, how did the “hybrid” approach (combining geographically broad sampling with inclusion-focused methodology) enhance the value of findings compared to traditional approaches, and how well did this design align with the operational capacities and training needs of the supported civil society organisations? How effective was the integration and contribution of expertise from affiliated entities, EDGE Foundation and Election-Watch.EU?
- **Specific Deep Dive (JAAGO):** Given JAAGO’s multi-tiered implementation across divisions, constituencies, and communities, which components of the civic education model demonstrated the greatest potential for sustainability and

¹ Please note that the ESF activity cluster represents the largest component of the project in terms of scope, number of activities. Evaluators should therefore allocate a proportionally higher share of their time and resources to the evaluation questions directly related to this cluster to ensure the depth of analysis required. The financial offer should reflect this imbalance; specifically, the resources allocated to the ESF-related evaluation questions should be approximately double those allocated to each of the JAAGO and NIMD clusters.

scale-up? What specific organisational and contextual drivers distinguish high-performing sites from others?

- **Specific Deep Dive (NIMD):** What proportion of the baseline-identified capacity gaps (centralised decision-making, lack of inclusive strategies) were addressed? To what extent can observed changes in party behavior (e.g., Code of Conduct compliance, women's participation) be attributed to NIMD's activities versus external factors (BEC enforcement, media pressure)?
- Did these interventions enhance the credibility, integrity, transparency, inclusiveness and participation in the elections?
- How effectively did they address the operational needs of the target groups? Were capacity-building gains translated into operational improvements? Which factors enabled or hindered achievements?

- **Efficiency**

- Did the consortium structure (EPD, NIMD, JAAGO, with affiliated entities and sub-contracts) provide good value for money?
- Did the "three fiscal organisations" model for AFED provide good value for money compared to a simpler setups?
- Did coordination challenges and regulatory delays reduce efficiency?
- Did the combination of grants, technical assistance, and international expertise represent an efficient model for strengthening citizen observation?

- **Coherence**

- (External) How well did the project fit with other actors and policies during the political transition? Was the project coherent with the EU's and other donors' democracy support strategy? How effectively did the project avoid duplication with other major actors in the area of electoral support while aligning with the national reform agenda without compromising independence? How coherent was the project with other EU instruments to support the electoral process, e.g. through IFES or the EU EOM? (2) How coherent was the project with other EPD projects and EPD policies?
- (Internal) To what extent did the three pillars (support to citizen election observers, civic and voter education, and political parties) generate synergy by amplifying mutual impact?
- How well were the affiliated entities, EDGE Foundation and [Election-Watch.EU](#), as well as the sub-contracts with DRL and DRI integrated in the overall action and strategy?

- **Impact**

- What broader systemic changes result from the project for the electoral ecosystem and target groups?
- What is the evidence attributing these shifts specifically to the intervention rather than to other factors?

- **Sustainability**

- **Specific Deep Dive (ESF):** What institutional mechanisms or capacity-transfer pathways are required to ensure the continuity of the professionalisation of citizen election observers in a potential next phase or through independent local ownership?
- **Specific Deep Dive (NIMD):** What specific institutional mechanisms or partnership models are required to sustain and deepen gains in party professionalisation and inclusivity beyond the current project cycle?
- **Specific Deep Dive (JAAGO):** Which component of the civic education model offers the best pathway for long-term sustainability and scale-up?
- To what extent have the project's core gains been institutionalised within local partners to ensure long-term continuity after the end of the project?
- What are the primary structural and political risks that could undermine their sustainability?

- **EU Added Value**

- How consistent has the project been with EU values for external democracy promotion?
- What has been the added value of the intervention being funded specifically by the EU compared to other donors?
- How has the intervention contributed to the EU agenda in Bangladesh?
- And how did the project communicate or amplify the EU's added value?

Several instances of impact stemming from the different interventions under the project have already been identified by the consortium partners, through the application of the outcome harvesting evaluation method. Here, the Evaluators are tasked to continue this by :

- Completing the harvest (i.e. collection) of outcomes in the project's database of harvested outcomes (as provided by the evaluation commissioner), including identifying and documenting outcomes that are missing, incomplete, or have not yet been collected during previous phases. This should be done through interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, or other suitable evaluation activities conducted as part of the assignment.
- Substantiating the already harvested outcomes (i.e. fact-check the qualitative data through the collection of additional data) when conducting the planned interviews, focus groups, surveys..etc.
- Integrate such data into the final evaluation draft, with the expectation that the analyses conducted during the evaluation draw as much as possible on the harvested outcomes.

b. Evaluation phases

The inception phase includes and compiles in one inception report:

- A description of the project's theories of change, demonstrating a sound understanding of how activities were designed to contribute to intended capacity and policy changes, alongside documentation of the underlying power structures, incentives, and relationships among key stakeholders that affect the realisation of these changes.
- An evaluation matrix summarising the design of data collection processes, such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys, including an assessment of their feasibility through scoping interviews and a preliminary desk review of project documents, as well as a mapping and analytical summary of relevant grey and academic literature to contextualise the raw findings from the evaluation.
- The structure of the evaluation report detailing the sections and sub-sections will answer the selected evaluation questions under the evaluation matrix.
- A workplan presenting the steps for the evaluation.
- A rationale explaining which concrete measures and mechanisms the evaluation team will carry out to ensure that recommendations are discussed with relevant stakeholders to translate them into actionable measures.

The evaluation phase will result in one evaluation report gathering lessons learnt, challenges faced, and best practices and use such insight to generate recommendations that can help the project consortium to reflect on how to sustain and replicate good practices from the project.

The evaluation report includes :

- An executive summary of the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation.
- A 2-pager communication document, summarising the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation (the template will be provided by the evaluation commissioner).
- A description of the project context (analysis of the problems justifying the interventions and a narrative description of the theories of change drafted at the inception phase).
- A presentation of the findings structured around the evaluation questions selected under the evaluation matrix.
- A list of actionable recommendations providing concrete measures to replicate or improve the realisation of such interventions in the future of the project or in other projects.
- An annex : an updated database compiling all the harvested outcomes, describing the project's impact (using a template provided by the evaluation commissioner).

Key requirements :

- The Evaluator will hand over, upon request, to the evaluation commissioner the transcripts (or the summaries of the transcripts) of the interviews and focus group discussions conducted and the raw results of surveys disseminated, each time a draft version of a deliverable is due.

- At least 30% of interviewed stakeholders shall be FSTP (Financial Support for Third Parties) beneficiaries.
- The methodology must be gender-responsive, conflict-sensitive, and adapted to political and electoral context in the country under investigation.
- All written outputs must be clear and accessible, using plain language. Abstract reasoning should always be illustrated with concrete examples or findings, and technical/specialised language should be avoided or clearly explained.

The full evaluation process is to be completed by December 2026.

4. Deliverables and timeline

- An *inception report*. The content of the inception report is described in “Evaluation modalities”.
- A *full evaluation report* (in English). The content of the evaluation report is described in “Evaluation modalities”. The report includes a 2-pager communication document, summarising the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation (the template of the document will be provided by the evaluation commissioner). Included in this deliverable are as well 2 presentations of the final report, at project consortium level, and to the donor (and any other interested parties identified along the evaluation).
- The raw data collected during the all evaluation exercise : interview transcripts, focus groups transcripts and survey results (only upon request).
- The updated raw data of the harvested outcomes, the description of their significance, the documentation of the Project's contributions to their realisation and the description of external (negative and positive) contribution to the outcomes.

| Deliverable | Indicative deadlines |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Draft Inception report | 01/09/2026 |
| Final Inception report | 15/09/2026 |
| Validation workshop(s) of preliminary findings with of the consortium partners | In October - November (TBD) |
| Draft final evaluation report | 15/11/2026 |
| Presentations of the findings and recommendations to the relevant stakeholders | End of November 2026 (TBD) |
| Consolidated final evaluation report | 15/12/2026 |

5. Documents to be consulted (preliminary list)

To prepare the inception report, as part of its desk review, the Evaluator(s) should review all the following background information on project implementations and achievements:

- Project proposal (Description of the Action attached to the contract);
- Results chain (Logical Framework attached to the contract);
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan of the Project;
- Interim reports submitted to the donor (e.g. Quarterly Reports);
- Research and policy documents produced over the course of the Project, including,
 - Reports and activity deliverables;
 - The database of harvested outcomes;
 - Practitioner and applied research outputs produced under the project.

6. Budget

The maximum total budget available under this contract is **EUR 26,500 with all taxes included**. The budget shall be inclusive all travel costs (international and local), per diems, data collection tools / software and workshop organisation costs

The budget will be split in three instalments, to be transferred to the Evaluator after the completion of the afore-mentioned assignments.

- 1st Installment (10%): Upon approval of the Final Inception Report.
- 2nd Installment (20%): Upon submission of the Draft Evaluation Report.
- 3rd Installment (70%): Upon approval of the Final Evaluation Report (including the outcome harvesting database).

7. Eligibility criteria

For a bid to be considered eligible, it should confirm the following:

- Proven track record of conducting external evaluations and evaluative research of projects related to citizen election observation, political party capacity building, civic and voter education, and related activities and familiarity with different citizen observation methodologies.
- Experience in conducting external evaluation or evaluative research demonstrated by at least 2 evaluation or research reports.
- Prior experience of working in Bangladesh.
- Excellent knowledge of English and Bengali is required.
- The application is complete and submitted in due time in accordance with Article 8 of the present TOR.

We are preferably looking for evaluators and/or researchers with prior experience using the outcome harvesting method, and/or other complexity-aware evaluation methods (contribution analysis, process tracing, realist evaluation, etc).

Applicants are invited to submit the application documents detailed below, which as a whole constitute the application package. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

8. Application procedure

a. Deadline

Interested bidders are requested to submit a **technical and financial offer** which will be assessed by an Evaluation Steering Committee against the criteria listed in *Annex 1*. Please find Annex 1 below at the end of the TOR.

The application package is to be sent at the latest by 20th of July **2026, 23:59 CET** to corentinpecot@epd.eu and bangladesh@epd.eu.

→ Subject line: *“AHEAD Bangladesh – Evaluation of the project”*

Requests for clarification may be submitted to the email address above until the 10th of July 2026, 23:59 CET. Answers will be published on EPD’s website by the 13th of July 2026, 23:59 CET.

b. Technical offer

The technical offer is composed of the :

- Updated CVs of the Evaluator(s);
- [Annex 2 - Application form filled in.](#)

c. Financial offer

The financial offer shall be: A separate document in the form of a quotation broken down into a detailed budget, that includes the total amount of the offer, all taxes included.

d. Selection modalities

An Evaluation Steering Committee will be established to evaluate the bids and coordinate the evaluation process on behalf of the consortium. The Evaluation Steering Committee, led by the EPD Project Manager, will be the first line of contact with the evaluation team lead.

The technical offer will be weighted with 80%; the financial offer will be weighted with 20%. Only candidates scoring at least 75/100 with regard to the criteria set in Annex 1 for their technical offer will have their financial offer considered. Bidders may be invited for an interview during the technical evaluation if deemed necessary by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

EPD reserves the right to enter into a negotiation with the candidates on the financial offer proposed by them, before finalising the selection process. The selection process will be finalised after candidates shortlisted in the second step of the process have been interviewed by the Evaluation Committee and agreement on the offer has been found.

e. Indicative calendar

| | |
|--|--|
| Publication of the call for tenders | 22nd of June 2026 |
| Deadline to submit the application | 20th of July 2026 |
| Evaluation of the offers | 20th of July until 14th of August 2026 |
| Negotiation and award | By 17th of August 2026 |

9. Data treatment

EPD collects and treats your private data in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 i.e. hereby requests personal data only for recruitment purposes, pursuing a legitimate interest in a reasonable way, and will delete them after it is judged no longer necessary to archive. Shortlisted applications will be provided to the Funding Agency to ensure compliance with EU procurement rules in external action projects. By bidding to this tender, you authorise EPD to treat your personal data accordingly.

ANNEX 1

TECHNICAL EVALUATION GRID

| <u>Criteria</u> | <u>Score</u> |
|--|-------------------|
| <p><u>Relevance and understanding of the project context, i.e:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrated understanding of interventions supporting citizen election observation, political party capacity building, civic and voter education, and related activities. ● Demonstrated familiarity with EU-funded democracy support programmes and donor expectations. ● Demonstrated understanding of the logic of the interventions implemented under the project. | [30] |
| <p><u>Methodological approach and design, i.e:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrated understanding of the evaluation’s methodological requirements. ● Relevance of the proposed evaluation design to the purpose and the scope of the evaluation. ● Incorporation of complexity-aware evaluation methods in the evaluation design. | [20] |
| <p><u>Evaluator qualifications and experience, i.e:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrated field work experience in Bangladesh. ● Demonstrated thematic experience and/or familiarity with NGO-led programmes in election observation. ● Demonstrated experience and expertise in conducting programme evaluations. ● Demonstrated expertise in the implementation of the evaluation methods and data collection processes proposed. | [20] |
| <p><u>Quality and practicality of deliverables and reporting.</u> This criterion assesses the evaluator’s capacity to provide clear, accessible, and actionable outputs. Points should reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Well-structured and realistic timeline for inception report and final evaluation report. ● Sufficient time-capacity to produce quality deliverables. ● Planned mechanism to translate evaluation findings recommendations into programmatic action points. | [30] |
| <p><u>Overall total score</u></p> | <u>100</u> |