

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

REQUEST FOR BID (RFB) FOR THE ASSESSMENT, DESIGN AND DEPLOYMENT OF A DIGITAL GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL SYSTEM (DGRS) FOR SIX FAIRTRADE-CERTIFIED FLOWER FARMS IN ETHIOPIA

Rights in Bloom: Empowering Workers in the Ethiopian Horticulture Sector (RIB-Ethiopia) PROJECT

1 Important TOR Information and Dates

TOR Name: Assessment, Design and Deployment of a Digital Grievance Redressal System (DGRS) for Six Fairtrade-Certified Flower Farms in Ethiopia		User Department: Programme Directorate
Location of Contracting Entity: Nairobi-Kenya	Correspondence Language(s): English	

TOR Package Available from: Wednesday, 26 August 2026	Tender Package Pickup Location: Fairtrade Africa Website
Deadline for Offer Submission: 09/09/2026 at 17:00 hrs EAT	Submit Offers to: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net

Fairtrade Africa reserves the right to accept or reject any late offers

Questions and Answers (Q&A)	
If any, Submit Questions in writing to: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net	
Last Day for Questions: 02/09/2026	Questions will be answered by: 04/09/2026
Questions will be answered through: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net	

2. Background

2.1 Overview of Fairtrade Africa (FTA)

Established in 2005, Fairtrade Africa (FTA) is a member of Fairtrade International and the umbrella network organization representing Fairtrade-certified Producer Organizations in Africa and the Middle East. It has four (4) regional networks: Eastern & Central Africa; Southern Africa; West Africa; and the Middle East & North Africa. Fairtrade Africa currently represents 1,445,265 farmers and workers in 684 Producer Organizations spread across 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East by providing services to them that contribute to the improvement of their livelihoods.

2.2 Overview of the Rights in Bloom: Empowering Workers in the Ethiopian Horticulture Sectors (RIB Ethiopia) Project

The Ethiopian horticulture sector is one of the country's key export industries and a major source of employment, particularly for youth and women. The cut flower sub-sector contributes significantly to national export earnings and provides livelihoods for thousands of workers across production farms and surrounding communities. Despite the sector's economic importance, workers continue to face challenges related to decent working conditions, including limited enforcement of labour standards, weak grievance-handling systems, inadequate occupational safety and health practices, limited collective bargaining capacity, and the underrepresentation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in leadership and decision-making structures.

In response to these challenges, Rights in Bloom: Empowering Workers in the Ethiopian Horticulture Sector (RIB-Ethiopia) (2026–2029), the second phase of the DONUTS programme: seeks to strengthen decent work practices and improve labour rights systems within the Ethiopian flower sub-sector. The project is implemented across six Fairtrade-certified flower farms: Sher Ethiopia PLC, Ziway Roses PLC, AQ Roses PLC, Herburg Roses PLC, Tinaw Flowers, and Yassin Legesse Johnson Flower Farm.

The six participating farms have a combined workforce of approximately 22,946 workers. Of these, the project targets approximately 18,223 direct rightsholders, including women, youth and persons with disabilities, with additional indirect reach at household and community level. Workforce figures are indicative and will be verified by the consultant during the inception phase. The system to be developed under this assignment shall, however, be accessible to the entire workforce of the six farms.

The intervention focuses on strengthening workplace systems for the protection of labour rights, improving grievance-handling and occupational safety mechanisms, enhancing trade union capacity and social dialogue, promoting gender equality and disability inclusion, and supporting policy engagement on decent work within the flower sub-sector.

All six farms operate a grievance mechanism, as required by the Fairtrade Standard for Hired Labour and by Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 of Ethiopia. Evidence from Phase I of the project (2022–2025) indicates persistent weaknesses in how these mechanisms work in practice: low worker awareness of how to lodge a complaint, fear of retaliation, limited trust in confidentiality, inconsistent case recording, no reliable data on resolution rates or turnaround times, and significant under-reporting by women and workers with disabilities.

Fairtrade Africa therefore wishes to engage a consultant to establish whether a digital, mobile-accessible reporting channel can strengthen these mechanisms and, on the basis of that assessment, to design, develop and deploy a Digital Grievance Redressal System (DGRS) across the six farms that is trusted by workers, compliant with Ethiopian law, owned by Fairtrade Africa, and sustainable beyond the life of the project.

3. Purpose and Objectives of the Consultancy

3.1 Purpose

The overall objective of the assignment is to assess needs, preferences and barriers of workers at the six target farms in safely accessing and using workplace grievance mechanisms. Based on the findings, design, and deploy a user-friendly mobile-based Digital Grievance Redressal System across all six farms. The system will strengthen rather than replace the existing grievance mechanisms required under the Fairtrade Standard for Hired Labour and applicable Ethiopian law. The system will ensure equitable access by all workers irrespective of literacy, language, handset type or ability to pay, and shall generate reliable case data on resolution rates, turnaround times and patterns of grievances, while ensuring appropriate data protection and confidentiality. The system shall be legally compliant, secure and user-centred

3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the consultant will:

- i. Assess worker needs, accessibility barriers and workers' digital readiness across the six target flower farms.
- ii. Assess the effectiveness of existing grievance mechanisms and the institutional and technical readiness of the six farms.
- iii. Determine the legal, regulatory and data-protection requirements governing the design, operation and hosting of the Digital Grievance Redressal System.
- iv. Identify and validate the most appropriate technical solution and develop a tested system specification and prototype.
- v. Deploy and operationalize the Digital Grievance Redressal System across the six farms and identify the capacity and arrangements required for its sustainable operation.

3.3 Tasks

Specifically, the consultant will deliver the following tasks within a period of 3 months:

- a) **Inception.** Refine the methodology, agree with the sampling frame, develop and pre-test the data collection tools, and agree with the field protocol with Fairtrade Africa and the farms.
- b) **Desk review.** Review and analyze existing evidence, including project documents, farm grievance records, union agreements, and applicable legal instruments.
- c) **Worker needs, digital readiness and inclusion assessment** across the six farms, comprising worker surveys, focus group discussions with women, youth and workers with disabilities, key informant interviews with grievance committee members, union representatives and management, and observation of the existing grievance process.

- d) **Stakeholder consultation and validation.** Targeted consultations with relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and Skills, the Ethiopian Communications Authority, the Trade Union Federation, and mobile network operators on coverage and messaging arrangements.
- e) **Legal and data protection review** of the requirements applicable to the design, deployment and operation of the Digital Grievance Redressal System.
- f) **Options analysis, specification and prototyping.** Prepare the system specification and carry out prototyping and usability testing with workers, including women, persons with low literacy and persons with disabilities.
- g) **Deployment.** Deploy and operationalize the system at all six farms, beginning with a supervised live test at two farms together with worker sensitization in local languages before full roll-out.
- h) **Training.** Train grievance committees, union representatives, human resource staff and case handlers; deliver training of trainers; and provide standard operating procedures for case handling.
- i) **Handover.** Hand over the system to Fairtrade Africa and the farms with full documentation and a costed sustainability plan, followed by a post-deployment support period of not less than three (3) months.

3.4 Minimum System Requirements

Any system delivered under this assignment must meet the following requirements, and bidders must state how each will be met:

- i. Cases are routed through the existing farm grievance committee, works council and recognized trade union structures, and not directly and exclusively to management.
- ii. Access does not require a smartphone, an application to download or the purchase of mobile data. Multi-channel access, including SMS, USSD or interactive voice response (IVR), is expected unless the assessment demonstrates otherwise, and reporting is free at the point of use for the worker.
- iii. The system is available in Amharic and Afaan Oromo at minimum, with a voice-based option for workers with limited literacy and provides a genuine anonymous reporting route where no worker, device identifier, telephone number or location data capable of identifying the complainant is retained.
- iv. Role-based access control applies. Farm management has no access to raw complainant's identity data, and all access events are logged and auditable.
- v. A separate, restricted and survivor-centred pathway exists for gender-based violence and harassment cases, consistent with the Fairtrade Africa Safeguarding Policy.
- vi. Every case receives an acknowledgement, a reference by which the worker can check progress without disclosing identity, and a closure response, with turnaround targets and automatic escalation. The system functions under intermittent connectivity, and existing non-digital reporting routes always remain fully available.
- vii. Personal data collected in Ethiopia is stored in Ethiopia in accordance with Proclamation No. 1321/2024, encrypted in transit and at rest, with a defined retention and deletion schedule. Fairtrade Africa is the data controller and holds all intellectual property, source code and transferable licenses. Bidders must confirm viable, secure and legally compliant hosting, backup and disaster-recovery options.
- viii. Operating costs- SMS, USSD, IVR, hosting and maintenance should be clearly separated from development costs and costed beyond project closure.

- ix. Governance and ownership- The system should define who owns the workflow, who resolves cases, who audits access, who handles escalations and who maintains the platform after handover.

4. Deliverables

The consultant will be expected to produce the following deliverables:

- i. **Inception Report** presenting the refined methodology, sampling strategy, data collection tools, field protocol, ethics and safeguarding plan, work plan and risk register.
- ii. **Assessment and Feasibility Report** presenting worker needs and digital readiness findings, the assessment of existing grievance mechanisms and farm-side readiness, retaliation risk analysis, legal and data protection analysis, and reasoned options recommendation, fully disaggregated, together with the cleaned and anonymized datasets.
- iii. **System Specification and Tested Prototype** setting out user journeys by worker segment, case workflow and routing rules, the role and permission model, the data model and retention schedule, accessibility requirements, and a prototype tested with workers.
- iv. **Developed and Deployed System** meeting the approved specification, with a completed data protection impact assessment, security test results, compliant hosting, user acceptance testing sign-off, a live test at two farms followed by deployment at all six farms, and worker sensitization and case-handler training in local languages.
- v. **Handover Package** comprising source code and repository access or transferable licenses, administrator and user manuals in English and Amharic, training of trainers, standard operating procedures for case handling, a costed sustainability plan through and beyond 2029, and a post-deployment support period of not less than three (3) months.

5. Reporting Requirements

- i. The Assessment and Feasibility Report shall present an executive summary of not more than five (5) pages covering the key findings, the options considered, the recommendation, and its implications for Fairtrade Africa, the participating farms and the trade unions.
- ii. The report shall provide the background, context, rationale and objectives of the assignment, and shall describe the methodology in sufficient detail, including the research design, sampling approach, data collection tools, analytical methods, limitations, and the measures undertaken to ensure data quality, ethical conduct and worker safety.
- iii. The report shall present and analyze the findings using appropriate quantitative and qualitative evidence, disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and contract type, stating explicitly where findings differ between farms, and shall set out the options analysis and a reasoned recommendation including costs, risks, legal and data protection compliance, and the five-year cost of ownership of each option considered.

- iv. The report shall not exceed thirty-five (35) pages excluding annexes, and shall include annexes containing the data collection tools, the sampling methodology, disaggregated data tables, the list of persons and institutions consulted, these terms of reference, and the cleaned and anonymized datasets.
- v. All reports shall be submitted in English, in editable Microsoft Word and in PDF. A plain-language summary of the assessment findings, translated into Amharic and Afaan Oromo, shall be provided for sharing with participating workers.

6. Location of Assignment

The assignment will be carried out in Ethiopia. Field work and deployment will take place at the six Fairtrade-certified flower farms, namely Sher Ethiopia PLC (16,385 workers), Ziway Roses PLC (1,590 workers), AQ Roses PLC (1,513 workers), Tinaw Flowers (1,420 workers), Herburg Roses PLC (1,330 workers) and Yassin Legesse Johnson Flower Farm (708 workers), and in worker residential areas where relevant, with institutional meetings in Addis Ababa. Workforce figures are indicative and subject to variation; the consultant will verify them during the inception phase. Development work may be conducted remotely, but usability testing, deployment, and support require physical presence at the farms.

7. Timeframe

The assignment shall be completed within three (3) months from the date of contract signature, inclusive of a post-deployment support period of not less than three (3) months.

8. Methodology

The assessment and design stages will use a mixed-methods, human-centred design approach. Bidders are expected to propose and justify their own methodology; the following elements are expected as a minimum:

- a) A worker survey with a sampling strategy representative across all six farms and across employment arrangement, department, sex, age and disability status, with the sample size and confidence level stated and justified.
- b) Key informant interviews with grievance committees, union officials, management and external stakeholders, and review of existing grievance case records with the consent of the farm and with personal data removed.
- c) Participatory prototyping and usability testing with workers, including workers with low literacy and workers with disabilities, and secondary analysis of the 2026 RIB baseline dataset.
- d) Free, prior and informed consent from every participant. Worker safety and privacy take precedence over data collection and over the delivery schedule, and disclosures of harm or gender-based violence must be handled in line with the Fairtrade Safeguarding Policy.

9. Contact Persons for the Assignment

The Project Manager and the Senior Project Officer will serve as the primary contact for this assignment. Fairtrade Africa will facilitate introductions to the six farms.

10. Assignment Qualifications

- a) Advanced degree in information systems, computer science, software engineering or a related field, at least eight (8) years' experience leading the design and deployment of digital systems, and a demonstrable record of delivering at least one worker-facing or community-facing reporting or case management system into live use.
- b) Demonstrated experience of mobile-accessible, multi-channel delivery in low-connectivity and low-literacy settings, including SMS, USSD or interactive voice response.
- c) Working knowledge of Ethiopian data protection and cyber law, in particular Proclamation No. 1321/2024, and of international labour standards, Ethiopian labour law and workplace grievance mechanisms.
- d) Demonstrated capability in human-centered design, participatory usability testing, information security testing and data protection impact assessment.
- e) Prior experience of system development or applied research in Ethiopia and demonstrated ability to handle sensitive personal data under confidentiality and safeguarding obligations.
- f) Familiarity with the Fairtrade system, certification standards or ethical trade programmes is an advantage.
- g) Strong analytical, communication and report-writing skills in English, and proficiency in Amharic and Afaan Oromo among field team members.

11. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation method for this procurement will be Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS). Technical criteria will account for 70% of the weight, while the cost/financial score will account for 30% of the weight.

11.1 Mandatory / eligibility criteria

Bids that do not include the following will not proceed to technical evaluation:

- i. Copy of a valid Tax Compliance Certificate.
- ii. Copy of the Registration/Incorporation Certificate.
- iii. Copy of a valid business permit.

11.2 Technical evaluation (70 marks)

Criterion	Marks
Relevant experience and track record, including at least one worker-facing or community-facing reporting or case management system delivered into live use	10

Understanding of the ToR and quality of the proposed assessment methodology and human-centred design approach	15
Composition, qualifications and relevant experience of the proposed team, including local language capability	10
Proposed technical solution, including multi-channel access, anonymity, language and accessibility provisions against the minimum system requirements	15
Security, data protection and legal compliance approach, including hosting and the data protection impact assessment	10
Implementation and deployment plan, including feasibility within the stated timeframe and risk management	5
Sustainability, handover, training and post-deployment support arrangements	5
Total	70

Bidders scoring below forty-nine (49) marks, being 70% of the technical score, will not proceed to financial evaluation.

11.3 Financial evaluation (30 marks)

The lowest evaluated compliant financial proposal will receive the full thirty (30) marks. Other proposals will be scored in inverse proportion to the lowest evaluated price. The contract will be awarded to the bidder with the highest combined technical and financial score.

12. Payment Schedule

The contract will be a fixed-price contract for the deliverables specified. All costs, including professional fees, travel, accommodation, per diem, translation, training, hosting and licence costs during the contract period, and all applicable taxes, must be included in the financial proposal. The total contract value shall be paid in instalments linked to the satisfactory completion and approval of agreed deliverables.

- i. An initial payment of 30% will be made upon written approval of the Inception Report and of the Assessment and Feasibility Report, including the system specification and the tested prototype.
- ii. A second instalment of 40% will be paid upon written approval of the developed system following completion of the data protection impact assessment, security testing and user acceptance testing.
- iii. The final 30% will be paid upon completion of deployment at all six farms and written approval of the Handover Package, including the sustainability plan and the completion of the post-deployment support period.

Fairtrade Africa reserves the right, on written notice following its review of the Assessment and Feasibility Report, to conclude the contract at that point where the assessment does

not support proceeding to development. In that event only the instalments due to that date are payable, and this constitutes full and final settlement, and Fairtrade Africa retains ownership of the assessment and the specification.

13. Submission Requirements and Instructions

13.1 Required documents

All applications must include the following:

- a) Separate technical and financial proposal documents.
- b) A technical proposal demonstrating the consultant's understanding of the ToR and the proposed methodological approach, including the sampling strategy, the proposed technical approach and platform, the hosting and data security arrangements, and the data quality assurance measures.
- c) A cover letter outlining how the consultant meets the required qualifications and expertise, duly signed and stamped.
- d) Detailed Curriculum Vitae of the consultant and all proposed team members, highlighting relevant skills, experience, and roles in the assignment.
- e) Three contactable references from organizations for which similar assignments have been conducted within the last three (3) years, with supporting evidence.
- f) A detailed financial budget including all costs and applicable taxes, showing separately the indicative recurrent annual running costs of the system after handover.
- g) Any additional information the consultant believes demonstrates added value to Fairtrade Africa within the scope of this assignment.

13.2 Submission instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically to procurement@fairtradeafrica.net, with the technical and financial proposals attached as separate files.

Subject line: RFB – RIB-Ethiopia: Digital Grievance Redressal System (DGRS)

Deadline for submissions: Wednesday, 09 September 2026 at 17:00 hrs EAT.

NOTE: Only shortlisted bidders will be contacted.

Proposals must be submitted electronically to: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net