

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Fairtrade International & Centre for Social Markets are seeking expressions of interest from qualified consultants to undertake a final evaluation of the EC SWITCH-Asia Project *"Switching to Green & Fair Fashion: Advancing sustainable production and consumption in cotton and textile value chains"*.

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

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## 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The European Commission (EC) funded the SWITCH-Asia project "Switching to Green & Fair Fashion: Advancing Sustainable Production and Consumption in Cotton & Textile Value Chains" under its SWITCH-Asia Grants Programme, which supports the promotion of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) patterns in Asian countries. The project is implemented by Fairtrade International (lead partner) together with four consortium partners: Centre for Social Markets (CSM, India), Fairtrade Germany, Max Havelaar France, and Partners in Change (PiC, India). The project ran from 1 May 2022 and is scheduled to conclude on 15 September 2026. The total project budget is EUR 1,983,563, with the European Union contributing 80%.

The overall objective of the project is to foster greener, low-carbon, resource-efficient, more circular and fairer cotton and textile value chains in India, contributing to sustainable economic prosperity and poverty reduction.

India plays a pivotal role in global textile production. The Indian textile and apparel sector contributes approximately 2.3% to national GDP, 13% to industrial production, and nearly 12% of exports, while employing millions of workers across rural and urban areas. Asia is the world's largest textile-producing region, and India exports more textile-based products than any country except China, with over 300,000 registered Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in the sector. At the same time, the global textile and apparel industry faces mounting pressure to address its environmental and social footprint, estimated to account for 8–10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, alongside significant water consumption, chemical-intensive processes, and opaque supply chains.

Many MSMEs within Indian textile clusters face structural barriers to sustainability: limited awareness of international standards, lack of affordable tools to measure greenhouse gas emissions, complex environmental compliance requirements, restricted access to green technologies and finance, and insufficient market linkages to sustainability-conscious buyers in India and the EU. These challenges create a significant gap between the sustainability expectations of global markets and the operational realities of local manufacturers.

Fairtrade has been working in India since 2013 to strengthen sustainable supply chains and improve the livelihoods of producers and workers in key agricultural and textile sectors. Building on this experience, the project consortium has worked to create an enabling framework for sustainable production, support green business development among cotton farmers and textile MSMEs, and facilitate access to green finance. Activities have included capacity building and technical assistance for Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and MSMEs, establishment of innovative resource efficiency pilots, training on sustainability certification, multi-stakeholder engagement, and consumer awareness campaigns in both India and the EU.

The project further contributes to EU policy priorities under the European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan, and draws on ESG reporting frameworks alongside India's National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct.

The project works towards two specific outcomes, against which the final evaluation will assess results:

**Outcome 1 — Textiles and cotton value chains in India adopt less polluting and more resource-efficient and circular processes and services**, as measured by: the number of MSMEs reporting a decrease in hazardous chemical use, wastewater production, freshwater consumption or GHG emissions (target: at least 12 MSMEs); and the number of cotton farmer organisations adopting sustainable water, chemical-efficient or carbon/GHG sequestration farm practices (target: at least 3 farmer organisations with 2,500 members).

**Outcome 2 — Textiles sector MSMEs producing in and sourcing from India are certified by Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability Standards (ESESS)**, as measured by: the number of cotton-textile MSMEs certified against Fairtrade cotton standards and/or related sustainability standards (target: at least 15 MSMEs); the number of MSMEs and large corporations in the EU and India making new or additional commitments to source from Fairtrade-certified sustainable cotton supply chains (target: 25 businesses, of which at least 10 MSMEs); the annual volume of Fairtrade certified cotton sold for the Indian market (target: 825,000 kg of Fairtrade seed cotton); and the number of MSMEs utilising project data and reports to access green finance (target: at least 10 MSMEs).

These outcomes are supported by three output areas: (1) awareness and capacity building across the textiles and cotton value chains for adoption of better environmental, social, and sustainability standards and circular production systems; (2) market linkages and demand for products made through more sustainable and circular cotton textile value chains; and (3) increased integration of sustainability parameters in studies, operational reporting, and mechanisms by textile value chain MSMEs. The final evaluation will assess the project's performance against these outcomes and output areas applying the OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of this final evaluation is to make an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of the project "Switching to Green & Fair Fashion: Advancing Sustainable Production and Consumption in Cotton & Textile Value Chains," covering its design, implementation, and results. The evaluation aims to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, applying OECD DAC evaluation criteria. It should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into future programming by Fairtrade International, its partners, and the wider SWITCH-Asia community.

To fulfil this purpose, the final evaluation will have the following specific objectives:

- a. Assess the extent to which the project's two specific outcomes and associated output areas have been achieved against the targets established in the logframe, with particular attention to the adoption of sustainable production practices by MSMEs and cotton farmer organisations, progress on sustainability certification, market linkage development, and green finance uptake.
- b. Analyse the project's contribution to improving environmental sustainability practices among participating MSMEs and farmer organisations, particularly in relation to GHG emissions management, water and wastewater management, responsible chemical use, and circular production systems.

- c. Assess the project's efficiency, value for money, and quality of implementation, examining the effectiveness of the consortium partnership model across Fairtrade International, CSM, Fairtrade Germany, Max Havelaar France, and Partners in Change.
- d. Assess the effectiveness of market linkage and demand-creation activities, including B2B engagement, consumer awareness campaigns, and sourcing commitments by brands and retailers in India and the EU.
- e. Document, collate, aggregate, analyse and create reports for the main outputs of the Action as a part of the overall report but also provide impact reports for specific interventions and their impact.
- f. Document best practices, case studies, and key lessons learned from project implementation, including from the sustainability pilots and capacity-building activities across participating textile clusters.
- g. Develop an exit strategy with key recommendations and an action plan for the long-term sustainability of project results, including the continuation of activities, replication across other textile clusters in India, strengthening of linkages between MSMEs, brands, and sustainability initiatives beyond the project period, and actionable recommendations to contribute to Fairtrade International's broader strategy on sustainable textile supply chains in India and the region.

### 3. SCOPE AND METHODS

#### 3.1 Geographical scope

The study should have a national and regional geographical scope, focusing on the locations where the majority of project interventions took place. The primary focus is India, where most project activities were implemented by CSM and Partners in Change across the cotton and textile value chain. Within India, the study should concentrate particularly on the Tiruppur textile cluster in Tamil Nadu — one of India's largest hubs for knitted garment manufacturing and export — which served as the main site for MSME engagement, capacity building, resource efficiency pilots, and sustainability certification support. Where relevant, the study should also examine the broader replication potential of the project model across other textile clusters in Tamil Nadu and India more widely.

A secondary geographical scope covers the European Union, specifically France and Germany, where Fairtrade Germany and Max Havelaar France led business linkage and market demand activities engaging EU-based brands and retailers. The evaluation should assess the outcomes of these activities in relation to sourcing commitments and market linkages created, proportionate to the scale of engagement in these countries.

#### 3.2 Methodology

A kick-off meeting between the selected consultant(s) and the Fairtrade International project team will be required to agree on the final methodology, research questions, sampling approach, and workplan before fieldwork begins.

The evaluation should employ a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Given the nature of the project's outcomes — which involve behavioural and systemic changes across a complex, multi-stakeholder value chain — Fairtrade International encourages the use of Outcome Harvesting as a primary methodological approach. Outcome Harvesting is particularly suited to this evaluation as it works backwards from observed changes to determine the project's contribution, rather than measuring only pre-set indicators. This makes it well-suited to capturing unintended outcomes and the project's contribution to systemic change across the cotton and textile value chain, alongside assessment of the logframe targets.

The methodology should include the following components:

- Desk review of all relevant project documentation, including the logframe, inception report, annual and interim narrative and financial reports, baseline and endline studies, sustainability assessments, training materials, monitoring data, project implementation tracking and reporting data and other project outputs.
- Outcome Harvesting sessions with project implementing teams and key stakeholders to identify, describe, and verify changes that have occurred among MSMEs, farmer organisations, brands, and policy actors that the project has contributed to.
- In-person and virtual interviews and focus group discussions with project implementing partners (CSM, Partners in Change, Fairtrade Germany, Max Havelaar France), participating MSMEs and cotton farmer organisations, brands and retailers engaged through market linkage activities, and other relevant value chain actors.
- Factory-level engagement with selected MSMEs within the Tiruppur cluster to assess sustainability practices adopted, environmental improvements, and operational changes resulting from project support.
- Consultation with the full implementing consortium through a physical or virtual workshop to validate emerging findings and recommendations.
- Consultation with other SWITCH-Asia grantees and the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, to gather good practices, benchmark results, and contextualise the project's contribution within the wider programme.

### 3.3 Sampling Strategy, Research Questions and Indicators

For technical details on sample sizes feasible within the available timeline and budget (see Section 7), we look forward to proposals from interested consultants. Submitted proposals should contain proposed research questions and indicators to measure the evaluation objectives, structured around the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, and grounded in the project's logframe. The decision on final research questions and samples — including the MSMEs, farmer organisations, brands, and other stakeholders selected for qualitative interviews — will be taken jointly by the consultant(s) and Fairtrade International's evaluation team during the inception phase.

## 4. OUTPUTS

The expected evaluation outputs to be submitted to Fairtrade International are:

- Inception report** outlining the proposed methodology, Outcome Harvesting approach, research questions, sampling strategy, workplan, and timeline for the evaluation. The inception report should also identify potential risks and the ethical standards and data protection protocols to be followed. This report will be reviewed and agreed upon jointly by the consultant(s) and Fairtrade International before fieldwork begins.
- Detailed draft and final evaluation report**, following an in-depth review by Fairtrade International and its consortium partners, in a format agreed between the consultant(s) and Fairtrade International. The report should cover all evaluation objectives, applying OECD DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability), and provide a clear assessment of results against the project logframe targets. The report should combine rigorous narrative analysis with clear data presentation and include an executive summary, key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Exit strategy**, as a stand-alone section within or annexed to the final report, providing key recommendations and an action plan for the long-term sustainability of project results, opportunities

for replication of the project model across other textile clusters in India, and recommendations for strengthening linkages between MSMEs, brands, and sustainability initiatives beyond the project period.

d. **Output wise report** documenting, analysing and creating reports for the main outputs of the Action as a part of the overall report but also provide impact reports for specific interventions and their impact. Create brochures and leaflets which capture the end-to-end details from intervention to impact of specific activities to enable sharing the findings and the impact details with different stakeholders.

e. **Written case study report** documenting sustainability practices adopted by selected MSMEs within the Tiruppur cluster, including improvements in GHG management, water and wastewater management, and responsible chemical use, as well as lessons learned from programme implementation. Case studies should highlight both successes and challenges and be written in a format suitable for external dissemination.

f. **Complete the Impact report in the standard EU SWITCH ASIA format** so as to enable wider circulation across the SWITCH ASIA network and facilitate the dissemination of the results.

f. **A section on methodology and data analysis**, included within the final report, describing the Outcome Harvesting process and other methods used, the research ethics and protocols followed, and how compliance with EU data protection regulation was ensured.

g. **All raw data and interview protocols** collected during the research process made available to Fairtrade International in an agreed format, allowing for future analysis while respecting EU data protection regulation.

h. **PowerPoint presentation** summarising the main findings, outcomes harvested, and key recommendations, to be presented to Fairtrade International's project team, consortium partners, and other key stakeholders.

i. **Virtual or in-person workshops** presenting evaluation findings and recommendations to Fairtrade International's project team, consortium partners, the SWITCH-Asia programme, and other relevant stakeholders.

## 5. CONSULTANCY TEAM EXPERTISE

The evaluation will be awarded to a recognised research institution or consultancy agency that proposes a team meeting the following criteria. Given the multi-country and multi-stakeholder nature of the project, Fairtrade International encourages applications from teams that combine complementary expertise, including evaluation methodology, textile sector knowledge, and on-the-ground experience in India.

### Essential qualifications and experience:

- Demonstrated experience applying OECD DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) in the context of international development programmes, preferably EC-funded projects.
- Experience with Outcome Harvesting or other contribution-based evaluation methodologies suited to complex, multi-stakeholder programmes.
- Proven experience conducting programme evaluations of comparable scope and complexity, including multi-partner, multi-country projects in the fields of sustainable production and consumption, supply chain sustainability, or private sector development.

- Demonstrated knowledge of sustainability issues within the textile and apparel sector, including environmental management, resource efficiency, GHG accounting, chemical management, and sustainability certification schemes.
- Experience working with MSMEs and industrial clusters in India, including conducting field-based research, factory-level engagement, and stakeholder consultations with a range of actors across value chains.
- Strong qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis skills, including experience conducting interviews, focus groups, and surveys with diverse stakeholder groups.
- Ability to present data and findings concisely and clearly, with strong data analysis, data presentation, report writing and communication skills in English.
- Awareness and adoption of DEI approaches, including gender equality and youth inclusion, in evaluation design and implementation.
- Demonstrable policy on research ethics and compliance with EU data protection and privacy regulation.
- Disclosure of any possible conflict of interest with respect to Fairtrade International or any of the project consortium partners.

**Desirable qualifications and experience:**

- Prior experience evaluating EC-funded projects, SWITCH-Asia grants, or equivalent international development programmes.
- Familiarity with the Tamil Nadu textile ecosystem, particularly the Tiruppur cluster and surrounding districts.
- Knowledge of ESG reporting frameworks, green finance mechanisms, and sustainability standards relevant to the Indian textile sector.
- Experience in producing written case studies and external communication materials.
- Proficiency in English and languages relevant to the project context; knowledge of Tamil or Hindi would be an advantage for fieldwork.

**6. HOW TO APPLY**

The application documents should include:

- Detailed evaluation proposal (maximum 10 pages) based on this ToR that includes a clear description of the intended scope (sample sizes, etc.), proposed Outcome Harvesting and mixed-methods approach, proposed research questions, work plan, potential risks, research policy and ethical standards to be followed, and a detailed timeline (using the broad timelines provided below in Section 7).
- Detailed budget for this work. The presented budget must be inclusive of the applicable VAT (in EU or India).
- Evidence or description of the research team's compliance with EU data protection regulation.
- Description of the research team highlighting prior relevant experience in evaluating EC-funded or equivalent development programmes, and experience in impact assessment of sustainable production and consumption projects, private sector development, and/or textile sector programmes in India, including expertise in MEL, gender equality, and DEI approaches.
- Detailed CVs of all members of the proposed research team highlighting research experience relevant to the study.

- References: names and contact details of two organisations for whom similar evaluation work has been conducted in the past five years.
- Submission of two examples of recent evaluation or research work undertaken by the tendering party in a related field.

**7. ESTIMATED TIMELINE:** The final selection and contract award is expected by end of July 2026. The study is expected to be undertaken between 15<sup>th</sup> of August and mid-October, with completion before 20 October 2026.

**8. TIMELINE FOR RESPONDING:** Interested research teams are requested to submit their proposals to [info@csmworld.org](mailto:info@csmworld.org) by 15<sup>th</sup> of July at 18:00 CEST, indicating "EC SWITCH-Asia Final Evaluation Consultancy" in the subject line.

<A detailed project description is available upon request>

### ADDITIONAL NOTES ON ELIGIBILITY AND VISIBILITY (PLEASE READ)

The services provided under this tender are part of an EU-funded project. Accordingly, this tender process follows EU regulation on procurement by grant Beneficiaries in the context of European Union external actions. Participation in tender procedures managed by the Beneficiary is open on equal terms to all natural persons who are nationals of, and legal persons that are effectively established in, one of the following eligible countries/territories/beneficiaries:

- EU Member States
- Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II beneficiaries (listed in the Annex I of IPA III Instrument)
- European Economic Area
- Developing countries and territories (included in the OECD-DAC list of ODA recipients<sup>1</sup>), which are not members of the G20 group<sup>2</sup>
- Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) covered by Council Decision 2013/755/EU of 25 November 2013 on the association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Union
- Member States of the OECD are also eligible when contracts are implemented in a Least Developed Country or in a Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC)
- (i) Developing countries, as included in the list of ODA recipients, which are members of the G20 group; (ii) any other countries and territories (i.e. all countries of the world). The entities of these countries can only participate in procedures where the country itself is a beneficiary of the action. This can happen in particular in thematic programmes, programmes financed under the Partnership Instrument<sup>3</sup>, or where the success of a regional programme necessitates the participation of the said country.
- Any countries for which reciprocal access to external assistance is established by the Commission.

Deliverables for this project need to follow EU visibility rules. An annex listing all these visibility rules is available upon request, but they are summarised as ensuring that the European Union is visibly recognised as the donor in all workshops, publications, and communications.

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the DAC List of ODA Recipients, effective for reporting on 2025 flows, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/dac-list-of-oda-recipients.html>

<sup>2</sup> Non-eligible G20 Member developing countries are: India, Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa. South Africa will be eligible when the action is co-financed with the EDF. Turkey is also a developing country (upper middle income) G20 Member but is eligible as a beneficiary listed in the Annex I of IPA III.

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/funding-instruments-programming/funding-instruments-partnership-instrument\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/funding-instruments-programming/funding-instruments-partnership-instrument_en)