



## **Request for Information (RFI)**

**To:** Industry Representatives, US Small Businesses, International or Local Pakistani Organizations.

**Subject:** WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION (WEET) ACTIVITY

**Reference Number :** WEET Activity  
**Release Date :** February 16, 2018  
**Response Due Date:** February 26, 2018, 16:30 (Pakistan Standard Time (PST))

### **I. Request for Information**

This Request for Information (RFI) is a preliminary call for expressions of interest to provide services for the activity titled, "Women's Economic Empowerment and Transformation (WEET)".

USAID's new Women's Economic Empowerment and Transformation activity will help women in target geographic areas (FATA/KP, Northern Sindh, South Punjab, and potentially Balochistan) to earn higher incomes and work in an environment increasingly free of violence and more conducive to their labor. It will provide new skills, access to resources, and linkages with markets to women in the informal economy, including home-based workers and unprotected piece-rate workers. The activity will conduct a survey of women-dominated micro-industries in each geographic area and tailor assistance appropriately to each context. It will also explore non-traditional sectors with potential for increased participation by women.

The activity will also engage local communities to expand the space for women's economic labor and social participation. It will create local networks of women workers and build their capacity to mentor others as well as identify and advocate solutions to barriers to social and economic empowerment. The activity will connect these local networks to various stakeholders, including labor unions, employers' associations, micro-finance institutions, and local elected representatives to build support for solutions to these obstacles.

The activity will have a special focus on work with men and boys to change attitudes towards women's participation in the labor force, their position at home, in the community and at large in society, and the acceptability of Gender Based Violence.

In addition, USAID seeks input regarding our proposed approach listed in Attachment A. The place of performance for this activity is Islamabad, Pakistan, with project sites spread all over Pakistan.

USAID/Pakistan intends to issue one Award for the provision of these services. USAID/Pakistan may set aside this procurement for U.S. Small business entities. The period of performance under this award will be for three to five years. An estimated award ceiling is between \$10M - \$25M.

Selected awardee will be required to successfully register their organization to operate in Pakistan. Also these organizations will be subject to partner vetting requirement. As per the vetting AIDAR clauses, key individuals of all offerors and that of any proposed sub-awardees that are notified of inclusion in the competitive range will be required to comply with the vetting requirement.

Interested parties wishing to participate should submit an expression of interest (5-15 pages) which addresses their capacity and capability for performing this activity. USAID relies the recency and relevancy of past performance information when determining awards to recipients. Recency is defined as awards recipient has performance as either a prime or subcontractor within the last 3-5 years. Relevancy is defined as awards the recipient has received for projects with a similar scope and magnitude as this requirement. Please include three examples of past performance history meeting this criteria.

## **II. Background**

Over the last few years, the Government of Pakistan has made several strides towards achieving gender equality. Pro-women legislation has been passed regarding harassment in the workplace; quotas for women in the national, provincial, and local legislatures, and in public sector jobs; prevention of domestic violence; women's access to inheritance; protection against early marriage; prevention from acid crimes; custodial rights, rape and honor killings; family courts for marital disputes, and the establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). The 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 devolved authority on women's development to the provincial Women's Development Departments . Women's development departments and other associated departments, such as social welfare departments and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women (PCSW), plan, coordinate, and implement policies at the provincial level to increase gender equality. At the federal level, the NCSW engages on gender policy and the Ministry of Human Rights has the mandate to implement gender policies and regulations.

Pakistan is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 38 of the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees citizens the right to pursue economic opportunities irrespective of sex, caste or creed and related labor laws.

Despite these strides in the legal framework, legislation remains largely unimplemented resulting in continued discrimination and gender based violence with impunity. In its 2016 Gender Gap Report, the World Economic Forum ranked Pakistan 143 out of 144 countries. As part of the Gender Gap Index in the same report, Pakistan ranked 143 on economic participation and opportunity, 135 on educational attainment, 124 on health and survival, and 90 on political empowerment. According to the Aurat Foundation report on Violence Against Women in Pakistan for 2015, 713 women were murdered in honor killings, 65 were burned in acid attacks, and 1,515 women were raped.

Women, religious minorities, and the urban and rural poor remain marginalized and disadvantaged groups in Pakistan. Women and girls in poor households bear a disproportionately high share of the poverty burden largely due to the cultural practices rooted in patriarchy. Their greater deprivation is due to a host of factors, including restricted mobility, lack of education and training, limited access to or ownership of resources and assets, discrimination in labor markets, and limited access to credit and social services.

Reduced investment in women's human capital, gender based violence, weak implementation of laws, compounded by the ideology of negative social biases, has led to fewer women participating in the labor force and leaving them economically vulnerable. Furthermore, figures from labor

surveys do not take into account women's participation in the informal and agricultural sectors of the economy – where they dominate in numbers. Women's economic contribution is therefore neither acknowledged, nor documented in its entirety. The conditions of women workers in Pakistan's informal economy and those working on a piece rate basis (Home Based Workers) are even more problematic, due to the absence or weak implementation of labour laws and policies. The 2016 UN Women Report on Women's Economic Status in Pakistan estimates that home based workers contribute approximately Rs. 400 billion or 3.8 % of Pakistan's GDP.

Social norms in Pakistan lead to women's overwhelming representation in the unpaid care work. Women in Pakistan are 10 times more involved in unpaid care work than men. This is also manifested in lower literacy levels and lack of market-based skills among women and girls resulting in their sparse representation in high skilled jobs.

According to the government's Labor Force Survey 2013-14, women's labor force participation is only 22.2 percent, representing a severe imbalance to male participation. The Government of Pakistan's key planning document, Vision 2025, recognizes women's economic concerns and commits the government to increasing women's labor force participation to 45 percent. However, this necessitates significant steps, including a comprehensive framework, to turn this commitment into a reality by 2025.

Providing access to a violence and harassment-free environment, affordable childcare, safe transport, residential services, and greater access to education and training are essential to encourage higher participation of women in the labor market.

These enormous challenges can be overcome if all stakeholders - government, civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners and the private sector, work together to encourage women's economic and social participation which will lead to higher incomes for women that will translate in the well-being of their families, resilient communities and improve Pakistan's economy.

## **HOW TO SUBMIT A RESPONSE**

Interested parties wishing to participate should submit their capabilities statements electronically to [pkcontract@usaid.gov](mailto:pkcontract@usaid.gov) with a copy to Mr. Aaqib Hameed at [aahameed@usaid.gov](mailto:aahameed@usaid.gov). Responses to this RFI will be accepted through February 26, 2018, 16:30 (PST). You will receive only an electronic confirmation acknowledging receipt of your response, but will not receive individualized feedback or suggestions.

Responses may contribute to upcoming activity design(s). However, this RFI will not be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation, award any grant, or pay for any information submitted as a result of this request. Responders are responsible for adequately marking proprietary or restricted information contained in their response

No basis for claims against the U.S. Government shall arise as a result of a response to this request for information or from the U.S. Government's use of such information. Specific questions about this RFI should be directed only to the email addresses identified above. This office will not respond to any telephone or other inquiries regarding this notice.

The submitted information must not exceed 15 pages. The submitted response should include:

**Reference Number: WEET**

**Name / Email**

**Affiliation/ Organization**

**Address**

- Short narrative, including capabilities, strengths and expected contributions
- Comments on our objectives
- Questions/Clarifications regarding our proposed strategy listed in Attachment A
- Experience- Past Performance references (3)

Please attach any documents that support your comments to the above questions. Please note USAID is not seeking technical or cost proposals at this time. Do not submit any proposal/application at this time in response to this RFI. Only the information requested above or in attachment-A will be considered. Issuance of this notice does not constitute an award commitment to Small Businesses, International or Local Pakistani Organizations on part of the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of comments. Questions regarding this notice can be directed to Mr. Aaqib Hameed at [aahameed@usaid.gov](mailto:aahameed@usaid.gov).

Regards,



Anthony E. Amerson  
Contracting Officer  
Office of Acquisition and Assistance

## **Attachment - A**

### **1. OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this project is to economically empower women in focus areas, and to transform the lives of women at home, in local communities, and in society at large. USAID thus seeks to create an environment that is supportive of women's socio-economic empowerment, free of violence, and more conducive to their labor. Achievement of this goal would decrease the economic vulnerability of women, contribute to economic growth, and strengthen community bonds in project areas.

USAID expects to achieve this goal through the following three objectives:

1. Help women earn higher incomes through assistance to women-owned micro businesses and women workers in targeted value chains,
2. Expand the space for and acceptance of women's labor and social participation in local communities, and
3. Reduce the risk of gender based violence through advocacy and community engagement, particularly with men and boys.

### **2. Activity Overview**

USAID's Women's Economic Empowerment and Transformation (WEET) project seeks to reduce the gender gap in economic opportunity between Pakistani men and women. This project will assist women in focus areas - FATA/KP, Northern Sindh, South Punjab, and potentially Balochistan - to earn higher incomes, build support for larger economic roles in local communities, and reduce gender based violence. Successful completion of this activity will create a more supportive environment for women's political, social, and economic empowerment. USAID seeks results-based, cost-effective, and creative solutions from local and international development partners to achieve these objectives.

### **3. QUESTIONS**

USAID is interested in gathering information on the following specific information / questions.

- Capability: Identification of US Small Businesses, International and Local Organizations with a capability to carry out the Women's Economic Empowerment and Transformation (WEET) activity.
- Identification of organizations with a proven track record and past performance for carrying out similar activities.
- Identification of challenges, constraints and limitations of this activity in Pakistan.
- Identification of organizational best practices for these activities in Pakistan or similar environments.

- Identification of Private sector successful engagements for carrying out similar activities.
  - Identification of local current similar activities being implemented by other development partners and how this project will compliment these efforts.
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