

Request for Proposals to conduct a Political Economy Analysis for the Strengthening Political Landscape (SPL) project in Bangladesh

Democracy International, Inc. (DI) works on democracy and governance (DG) programs worldwide for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other development partners. DI provides analytical services, offers technical assistance, and implements projects across the full range of DG programming.

Over the past decade, Democracy International has worked in more than 40 countries and in all regions of the world. Since 1985, DI's principals have advised and worked with election management bodies, civil society and election-monitoring organizations, political parties, legislatures, government agencies, and others in more than 70 countries.

Program Overview of SPL in Bangladesh

DI is implementing Strengthening Political Landscape in Bangladesh (SPL), which is funded by USAID and FCDO. SPL promotes inclusive and peaceful politics in Bangladesh by supporting political party activists and politically active citizens to be effective leaders and to advocate for more inclusive and peaceful party policies and practices. With eight regional offices along with a head office in Dhaka, DI works with thousands of grassroots political activists across the country.

SPL supports inclusive decision-making practices within political parties, builds the leadership capacity of political party members and promising politically active youth at the grassroots and national levels, and brings party leaders together in multiparty dialogue programs and single party activities.

Objective:

The objective of the Political Economy Analysis (PEA) is to identify and analyze the key political, social, and economic dynamics at work in Bangladesh among several key stakeholder groups. In December 2019, SPL conducted a political economy analysis looking at changes in the political landscape since the 2018 parliamentary elections. This is a follow-on to that analysis, looking at changes in the political landscape through today and the implications of those changes for Bangladesh's political future, including the upcoming 2023 parliamentary elections. This assessment will inform the interventions of SPL and inform donors' understanding of threats to further shrinking political space and opportunities to defend and expand the space.

Purpose:

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to invite prospective firms to submit a written response ("Response") for conducting a Political Economy Analysis in Bangladesh for the USAID- and FCDO-funded Strengthening Political Landscape project in Bangladesh.

The firm will consult with technical team members at the beginning and key intervals of the assessment and conduct approximately two to three weeks of in-person fieldwork in the eight divisions of Bangladesh to collect data. Field work should include key informant interviews and focus groups.

The PEA must deliver informed insights and reflections with practical recommendations that will clearly contribute to strategic thinking. As part of the design, the methodology, including the lines of inquiry, must be presented and mutually agreed upon before implementation.

Required Tasks and Deliverables:

Preparation

During the preparation stage, the firm will conduct a desk review and identify possible electoral event case studies for research under the assessment. The desk study will utilize internal sources including SPL's 2019/2020 PEA; periodic SPL program and contextual reports; SPL program design documents; SPL MEL plan; other SPL monitoring and research activity data and analysis. The desk study will also draw on external published research and reports related to Bangladesh; scholarly articles; comparative studies with other closing space contexts; political event databases; and publicly available news and information about the political context.

Deliverables for this stage include:

- Methodology including lines of inquiry and interview protocols, and proposed research questions/interview guide in coordination with assessment team, SPL staff, and USAID and FCDO as requested
- Work plan based on methodology outlined and PEA timeline
- A stakeholder interview list
- Training module for staff

Field Work

During field work, the firm will review assessment objectives and methodology with assessment team members, SPL staff, and USAID as requested and provide capacity building training to SPL staff on PEA tools, such as power mapping, network analysis, tracking, PEA mainstreaming into programming.

The firm or consultant will then commence in-person data collection (as public health conditions allow).

Tasks the firm will perform during field work are:

- Data collection through key informant interviews, focus group discussions in Dhaka and in select case study location(s)
- Conduct initial data analysis to formulate high-level findings. Conduct out-brief meeting with SPL program staff, USAID, and FCDO as requested.
- Conduct capacity building training with SPL staff to enhance staff capacity on PEA tools, such as power mapping, network analysis, tracking, PEA mainstreaming into programming, etc. Presentation on preliminary findings, including PowerPoint slides.

Data Analysis, Report Drafting and Review

During the final stage of the PEA, the firm will conduct an analysis of the data collected during the field work. The firm will gather feedback from assessment team members, SPL staff, and other stakeholders as relevant to inform the final version of these findings and recommendations and produce final version. The firm should ensure that the PEA is issue-specific to be usable and look at power dynamics and informal rules of the game, the formal and informal institutions (rules and norms) that shape the quality of governance and influence actors' behavior, their incentives, relationships, and capacity for collective action. This encompasses both the formal constitutional and legal frameworks, as well as informal norms, social and cultural traditions that guide behavior in practice and the extent to which state, civil society

and private sector institutions work according to known rules (in predictable ways) and how to navigate them.

Deliverables under this stage are:

- Draft PEA report including key findings and recommendations, for DI feedback
- Outline approaches/tools for ongoing adaption of the theory of change, results framework, or other project design frameworks, to allow for flexible shifts within the program based on ongoing PEA
- Final version of the report after feedback

Part 1–Invitation to Bid Letter

September 14, 2021

Dear Madam or Sir,

Enclosed is a request for proposal (RFP) to conduct a Political Economy Analysis for the DI Strengthening Political Landscape project in Bangladesh. I invite your firm to submit a firm fixed price proposal to perform services under this important activity. (See definition of firm fixed price here <https://www.acquisition.gov/content/subpart-162-fixed-price-contracts>)

Your response should include a clear technical description of the services to be provided, a detailed cost and financial component, and a comprehensive description of your organization's qualifications and prior experience. Your firm/organization's proposal must be prepared in accordance to the guidance provided in this RFP. This package must be submitted to **DI's Evaluation Committee**, infobangladesh@democracyinternational.com no later than **5:00 p.m. Dhaka, Bangladesh local time, October 1, 2021**. Bidders must put the RFP number (#4018C1913A) in the subject of the email. DI reserves the right to exclude late or incomplete proposals from its evaluation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Olds', followed by a long horizontal line.

Dana L. Olds
Chief of Party
Democracy International

Part 2–Instructions to Bidder

A. Type of Contract: Contingent on donor and programmatic approval DI intends to issue a firm fixed price contract or contracts (here after: ‘Contract’ or ‘the Contract’).

B. Submission of Questions: DI will answer any further questions submitted via email by September 20, 2021. The questions must be submitted by email sent to Evaluation Committee at infobangladesh@democracyinternational.com by September 20, 2021, 4:00 p.m., Dhaka, Bangladesh local time. DI will respond to these questions via email by September 24, 2021. DI will not provide technical guidance on preparation of your proposal regarding exact information to provide, cost or pricing, or any other technical requirement. No questions will be answered over the phone or in person: all questions must be submitted in writing via e-mail.

C. Submission of Proposal:

Last date of submission: **October 1, 2021, 5:00 p.m. Dhaka, Bangladesh local time**

All responses must be in English, and submitted to Democracy International through email:

E-mail: infobangladesh@DemocracyInternational.com

Bids received after the stipulated date and time shall not be accepted under any circumstances.

Technical and Financial Proposals

- i) The Proposal shall consist of two parts: the technical proposal and the financial proposal.
- ii) The technical proposal and the financial proposal **shall be submitted separately and in two different Files.**
 - The **Technical Bid** shall be prepared in accordance with TOR.
 - The **Financial Bid** shall be prepared in accordance with TOR and the Technical Bid.
- iii) Bids shall be signed by the bidder or a person or persons duly authorized to bind the bidder to the contract. A bid shall contain no interlineations, erasures, or overwriting except, as necessary to correct errors made by the bidder, in which case such corrections shall be initialed by the person or persons signing the bid.
- iv) Physical copies of proposals will not be accepted by the evaluation committee. All proposals must be sent electronically via email to infobangladesh@DemocracyInternational.com
- vi) All proposals are subject to the terms set out in this Document

Part 3- Evaluation of Proposals

A. Scoring of Technical Proposal

Both technical and financial proposals will be evaluated by a panel of professionally qualified reviewers internally sourced from DI.

1) **Technical proposal** will be evaluated out of a total score of 60 points as per the following criteria.

- Thirty (30) points for experience & expertise in conducting political economy analyses and/or other political analysis
- Twenty (20) points for demonstrated understanding of Bangladeshi political context
- Ten (10) points for strong English writing skills as demonstrated through the writing sample
- Ten (10) points for experience in data collection and data analysis

2) **Financial proposal** will be evaluated out of a total score of 30 points as per the following criteria:

- Competitiveness of unit prices proposed for each line item.

B. Award of Contract– DI will award the contract for this solicitation to the Bidder or Bidders that DI considers will deliver the best value to DI while providing the services requested. DI reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal or annul this solicitation process at any time prior to the award of contract, without incurring any liability to the affected Bidder(s) nor is DI obligated to inform the affected Bidder(s) of the grounds for rejection.

C. Conflict of Interest– The Bidder warrants that no DI employee or contractor has received or will receive any direct or indirect benefit arising from this solicitation or its subsequent award. All parties agree that the breach of this provision will result in the termination of the contract that may be awarded because of this solicitation.

D. Whistleblower Policy and Reporting Process

Democracy International is committed to operating with integrity and in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies. No adverse action, including demotion, discrimination, or discharge, will be taken against a Democracy International employee or Vendor in knowing retaliation for any lawful disclosure of information which the employee/vendor in good faith believes evidences:

1. A gross mismanagement of a federal contract or grant.
2. A gross waste of federal funds.
3. An abuse of authority relating to a federal contract or grant.
4. A substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or
5. A violation of law, rule, or regulation related to a federal contract, including competition for or negotiation of a contract, or grant.

Employees/Vendors may make anonymous whistleblower reports online at <http://whistleblower.democracyinternational.com> or via email at whistleblower@democracyinternational.com.

Democracy International will provide protection from retaliation for any whistleblower. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment. No supervisor, director, officer, or any other employee with authority to make or materially influence significant personnel/procurement decisions shall take or recommend an adverse action against an employee/vendor in knowing retaliation for disclosing alleged wrongful conduct. Any whistleblower

who believes she/he is being retaliated against should contact the Principal, Director of Administration, or his/her supervisor. Any employee found to have so violated this Policy shall be disciplined, up to and including termination.

Part 4- Terms of References (TOR)

Workflow

Over a span of a two-month period, the selected vendor will work with DI to complete each deliverable with the following broad workflow:

- i. Identify purpose and prepare a detailed statement of work prior to field research
- ii. Conduct a literature review with initial analysis prior to field research
- iii. Produce initial draft agenda and proposed research questions/interview guide prior to field research
- iv. Hold an applied PEA workshop in country to finalize research agenda and questions before field research
- v. Conduct the field research
- vi. Analyze and synthesize data
- vii. Brief mission and sector leadership on preliminary findings and discuss implications after the conclusions of field research and prior to departure
- viii. Conduct training with staff
- ix. Report on preliminary baseline findings following field research
- x. Prepare final report
- xi. Consider implications and further learning

Tasks

The selected vendor will be responsible for the entire process of the Political Economy Analysis. At DI's direction, the vendor will complete the following for the PEA:

Preparation phase (pre-fieldwork):

Tasks for this stage include:

- Development of a methodology, including lines of inquiry, interview protocols, and proposed research questions, in coordination with assessment team, SPL staff, and USAID and FCDO as requested
 - Development of a work plan and timeline based on methodology outlined and PEA timeline
 - Development of a stakeholder interview list
 - Training module for staff
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- Outline approaches/tools for ongoing adaptation of the log frame to allow for flexible shifts within the program based on ongoing PEA

Field Work

Tasks for this stage include:

- Data collection through key informant interviews, focus group discussions in Dhaka and in select case study location(s)
- Conduct initial data analysis to formulate high-level findings Conduct debrief meeting with SPL program staff, USAID, and FCDO as requested
- Conduct capacity building training with SPL staff to enhance staff capacity on PEA tools, such as power mapping, network analysis, tracking, PEA mainstreaming into programming, etc.
- Report on preliminary baseline findings.

Data Analysis, Report Drafting and Review

During the final stage of the PEA, the Consultant will conduct data analysis from information collected during the field work. The Consultant will gather feedback from assessment team members, SPL staff, and other stakeholders as relevant to inform final version of these findings and recommendations and produce final version. The firm should ensure that the PEA is issue-specific and contextualized. The PEA must examine power dynamics and norms that shape the quality of governance and influence actors' behavior, their incentives, relationships, power dynamics and capacity for collective action. This encompasses both the formal constitutional and legal frameworks, as well as informal norms, social and cultural traditions. The Consultant will also conduct additional remote or in-country data collection if necessary and as time and budget permits.

Tasks under this stage are:

- Preliminary draft of key findings and recommendations
- Final version of the report after feedback

Timeframe, Payment, and Reporting

Timeframe: The timeframe of the contract with the selected firm/consultant will be no later than October 30, 2021. DI will determine the scheduling of field visit, in coordination with the vendor. The PEA to be performed as a result of this Request for Proposals is time sensitive.

Pricing and Mode of Payment

During execution, DI will issue an implementation plan to direct selected vendor to commence the Political Economy Analysis ordered, and when the services/product/s are delivered, the vendor shall submit invoices to DI, no later than 10 business days after each deliverable is completed.

Proposal documents

Interested agencies are requested to submit the following application documents presented in English:

1) Proposal documents for technical evaluation:

- **In favor of experience & expertise**

- A 2–3-page proposal detailing proposed methodology and approach, demonstrating understanding of Bangladeshi political context
- Provide a CV for consultant or if a firm, a document of past experience
- Three references
- A writing sample of previous reports

2) Application document for financial evaluation:

Financial proposal will include the following:

- i) A budget narrative that outlines cost assumptions, including:
 - a. Salaries and Benefits
 - b. Per diem and Travel
- ii) A budget with detailed costs as outlined in the budget narrative.