

Terms of Reference

Consultant – Freedom of Association (FoA) & Labour Rights

1. Background

The global ready-made garment (RMG) sector has generated significant economic growth and formal employment across key production regions. However, despite these gains, workers—particularly women—continue to face systemic barriers to realising fundamental labour rights, including Freedom of Association (FoA) and Collective Bargaining (CB). These enabling rights are essential for addressing a wide range of human rights challenges, yet are routinely restricted due to legal, political, commercial, and structural pressures within the industry.

As new mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (mHREDD) legislation emerges, brands and suppliers will face increasing obligations to identify, prevent, and mitigate FoA risks—including those linked to their own practices. This creates both a need and an opportunity for coordinated, multi-stakeholder approaches that address root causes at systemic and sectoral levels.

To meet this need, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is establishing a social dialogue action network (name to be agreed), a collaborative platform that enables brands, manufacturers, worker representatives, and local partners to work together using a systems-thinking approach grounded in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development approach to Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) and Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement (MSE) principles. The first stage of the project running from November 2025 to April 2026 is financed by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

The first stage of the initiative focuses on building the foundations required for effective collaboration in Türkiye, Bangladesh and India: mapping key stakeholders, assessing engagement contexts, identifying root causes of FoA suppression, and developing the governance, safeguarding, and accountability architecture needed to support subsequent phases of action planning and risk mitigation. Insights from this phase will be critical to ensuring that the network is inclusive, credible, and sustainable, and that it strengthens multi-stakeholder capacity to address FoA risks at scale

This ToR sets out the role of an **FoA and Labour Rights Consultant** who will support the ETI in delivering the technical, analytical and facilitation components of the first stage.

Time period: ASAP to 30 April 2026

Reports to: ETI Programme Manager

Level of effort: Approx. 6.5 days / month

Location: Home-based

2. Purpose of the assignment

To provide high-level technical expertise in FoA, labour rights, HRDD, and multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure the first stage of the network is grounded in robust analysis and designed in line with international standards and best practice. The consultant will work closely with the ETI Programme Manager and the project in-country leads / engagement advisors in Türkiye, Bangladesh and India.

The consultant will contribute to:

- High-quality stakeholder and context analysis
- Preparation of tools, materials, and
- Development of the network's governance and accountability structures
- Technical guidance for brands through a structured Brand Engagement Series.

3. Objectives

The consultant will support ETI including the project's in-country leads / engagement advisors to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Develop a validated stakeholder and opportunity map** for Bangladesh, India, and Türkiye.
2. **Identify and synthesize country level FoA-related risks and root causes** emerging from initial bilateral stakeholder engagements.
3. **Support the design of the network's governance and accountability structures** ensuring alignment with MSE principles.
4. **Produce technical materials**, including briefing reports, assessment tools, and action-plan templates.
5. **Support preparation for the official network launch**, including technical content for brand engagement and communications.

4. Scope of work & key tasks

Stakeholder mapping & engagement support

- Provide guidance on stakeholder mapping and workshops (e.g. manufacturers, trade unions, business associations, NGOs, and other key actors) including outlining methodology and templates based on meaningful stakeholder engagement (MSE) principles and engagement feasibility and sensitivities to ensure alignment across country programmes.
- Remotely attend selected bilateral consultations or workshops as a technical resource as agreed with the project team and in-country leads.
- Identify risks and opportunities for MSE consistent with STITCH / ETI frameworks.

Risk synthesis & reporting

- Analyse workshop and consultation outputs from manufacturers, unions, brands, and worker representatives.
- Produce a consolidated summary of validated risks and themes for each country.
- Support the country leads and ETI to prepare three country-specific Briefing Reports summarising insights, FoA barriers, and stakeholder engagement considerations.

Support the design and delivery of a structured Brand Engagement Series

- Support ETI to develop and deliver a set of engagement workshops / sessions for ETI and Partnership for Sustainable Textile (PST) brands, highlighting findings from the country workshops; emerging legal requirements and the role of international brands in promoting FoA

Development of governance & accountability structures

- Provide expert input to the design of the network's governance structure (inclusive, accessible, equitable).
- Support interactive sessions to gather brand feedback on the network's governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms, operational structure, and next steps.

Tools, templates & technical resources

- Support finalisation of:
 - FoA risk assessment framework and tool including guidance for risk prioritization.
 - Action plan templates for brands and manufacturers.
 - Technical guidance notes for the project's Brand Engagement Series
- Ensure tools reflect systems-thinking, MSE principles, and HRDD best practice.

Support to continuation plans & communications

- Draft or review communications assets explaining FoA risks, legislative implications, and project rationale.
- Support ETI in preparing a "business case" narrative for brand participation, grounded in the insights from stage one of the project.

5. Deliverables

Deliverable	Description	Timing
Refinement of workplan	Review workplan and finalise in collaboration with the ETI Programme Manager.	Week 1
Stakeholder mapping technical input	Provision of tool, review and analytical summary of mapped actors, risks, and engagement sensitivities (for the three countries)	Month 1
Risk synthesis & reporting	Contributions to Bangladesh, India, Türkiye reports	Month 2
Governance & accountability framework inputs	Written recommendations and review of draft ToR & grievance mechanism	Month 3
Tools & templates	FoA risk assessment tool and guidance, action-plan templates	Month 4
Support to continuation plans & communications	Support the development of slides, talking points, technical summaries	Month 4
Final technical summary	Overview of technical work completed, considerations for the next stage	End of contract

7. Reporting & Management

- The consultant will report to the ETI Programme Manager, with close coordination with ETI country leads in Bangladesh, India, and Türkiye.
- Regular check-ins (weekly or as otherwise agreed) will ensure alignment with timelines and emerging stakeholder dynamics.

8. Qualifications & Experience

Required:

- Minimum 10 years' experience in labour rights and HRDD – specifically with expertise in industrial relations, Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining in supply chains.
- Proven experience with multi-stakeholder or social dialogue initiatives, with a strong network of key contacts at relevant organisations
- Strong capability in synthesising technical findings and producing high-quality reports/tools.

- Strong understanding of OECD HRDD, ILO Conventions 87/98, MSE principles, and garment-sector dynamics.

Desirable:

- Demonstrated expertise in analysing complex FoA environments across South Asia and/or Türkiye.
- Experience working directly with trade unions, manufacturers, and brands.
- Experience supporting MSIs, international NGOs, or governance platform design.
- Experience with gendered labour-rights analysis in supply chains.

9. Ethical and Safeguarding Requirements

- Commitment to ETI's safeguarding, confidentiality, and LASER principles¹ as applicable to multi-stakeholder engagement.
- Ability to manage sensitive stakeholder information responsibly.

10. Budget

- The total budget available for this service/consultancy from January to 30 April 2026 is £14,500. This amount is inclusive of all applicable VAT and reverse-charge taxes or any other comparable charges, including those that may arise for consultants based outside the United Kingdom.

11. Application Process

Candidates should submit:

- CV with two relevant references
- Short technical proposal outlining approach and any key assumptions or questions for ETI
- Daily rate and availability

Please send your submission to hr@eti.org.uk by 8 AM (UK time) on 15 December 2025. Please state "Consultant – FoA & Labour Rights" in the subject line. For any additional questions around the role, please use the same email address.

¹ Legitimate, Accountable, Safe, Equitable, Representative – NETWORK partners commit to embedding LASER principles in all workshops, consultations, multi-stakeholder forums, and bilateral engagements, and to ensuring that project governance and safeguarding systems reflect these standards.