



Fostering an Enabling Environment for MSMEs to Promote Responsible Value Chains (FEE-RVC 2025-2027)

Terms of Reference: (External Collaborator - Consultant, Promotion of Responsible Business Conduct in MSMEs and Local Governments)

Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the United Nations specialized agency devoted to advancing opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The organisation's main objectives are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities for all, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue in handling work-related issues.

Project overview

In responding to the stagnation of efforts to promote responsible business conduct (RBC) including respect of human rights at work, with challenges caused by lack of awareness and resources, particularly among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in value chains, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the project "Fostering an Enabling Environment for MSMEs to Promote Responsible Value Chains" (FEE-RVC) in February 2025. This project aims to 1) support local government institutions and private financial institutions in fostering an enabling environment to promote RBC for MSMEs through industry development, 2) build capacity of employers and workers to advance sustainable enterprises throughout the value chain in Asia, 3) to increase the governments' preparedness for international policy dialogue to promote RBC for MSMEs and 4) disseminate good social practices and key outcomes in international fora.

The project will explore means to engage with local governments in their policies to support MSMEs in local economy and to help create enabling environment for RBC in value chains. Particularly in the textile industry as a trial, this initiative will identify good cases of public-private cooperation that can be reapplied and promoted in other Asian countries.

Collaborating with Regional METI Bureau, local governments and local banks in Japan, the project will also stock new evidence, tools and good practices that can be reapplied and disseminated in value chains in other regions of Japan, across different sectors, and moreover, in other countries.

Scope of the assignment and key tasks:

The following assignments are implemented in Japan.

1. Organization of workshops/events:

1-1. Workshops for local governments:

Organize 1-day workshops for selected LGs, in which it will equip participants with the knowledge and tools to effectively promote RBC among businesses in their regions. A key focus could be integrating RBC into local initiatives, such as programs that support overseas sales of local MSMEs. Follow-up sessions will be arranged to reinforce learning and track progress.

1-2. Workshops for MSMEs:

Organize three capacity building workshops for MSMEs to promote the development of human rights policies and stakeholder engagement and share the outputs with MNEs with a view to enhancing collaboration within supply chains.

1-3. Workshops for employers' organizations:

Organize three workshops for employers' organizations to build their insights and intelligence on promoting RBC, which they can then provide to MSMEs to support the adoption of RBC practice.

1-4. Workshops for workers' organizations:

Organize at least two workshops for workers' organizations to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to promote RBC.

1-5. Awareness raising event:

Organize an awareness raising event in Tokyo as a forum for dialogue among stakeholders, inviting business leaders to share their experiences and strategies on RBC and expectation to policy environment.

[Key Tasks]

For this assignment, the key tasks of the consultant include:

- Design concept notes for each workshop (except for the awareness raising event), detailing objectives, target audiences, modalities, success indicators, pre- and post- questionnaires and other information as necessary
- Help reach out potential partners to co-organise the workshops/events by drafting explanatory notes and coordinate communications towards the delivery
- Conduct desktop research to collect RBC/HRDD good practices by LGs, MSMEs and other stakeholders and create a PowerPoint slide to include these slides at the workshops or to be used at future sessions
- Draft a summary report of the workshop/event to record discussions and results as well as suggestions for improvements, future replication, and expansion of the workshops
- Ad hoc support for Project Coordinator on the workshops/events and reporting related activities and documents as required

2. Enterprise case studies on RBC:

Conduct case studies with selected enterprises to evaluate broader benefits of implementing RBC. These studies particularly could go parallel with the tool development in Assignment 3 to examine how-to-do RBC with additional advantages, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of how RBC can add value to businesses. Study methodologies can include 1-on-1 interviews and/or survey questionnaire.

[Key Tasks]

For this assignment, the key tasks of the consultant include:

- Design a study implementation plan, detailing objectives, methodologies, target companies, success indicators, questionnaires, interview questions and other information as necessary
- Help reach out potential partners to seek collaboration in the study, by drafting explanatory notes and coordinate communications towards the delivery
- Conduct interviews and surveys, analyze the findings and draft a summary report
- Draft a case study report with relevant data, analysis, implications and suggestions
- Ad hoc support for Project Coordinator on the study and reporting related activities and documents as required

3. Development of RBC toolkits and analysis reports for local governments:

Develop toolkits to support local governments (LGs) in promoting RBC among MSMEs. These toolkits could include, among other potential tools, 1-2 pager assessment sheet of RBC practices to help LGs verify that RBC efforts made by MSMEs fulfil the requirement of LGs. These toolkits are planned to undergo trial roll out in MSMEs and used in the workshops for LGs (Assignment 1-1). Taking this as a pilot case, prepare an analysis report to identify opportunities, challenges, lessons learned and recommendation in relation to the RBC integration into LG's MSME development policies.

[Key Tasks]

For this assignment, the key tasks of the consultant include:

- Conduct desktop research to collect domestic/overseas practices of RBC promotion, particularly handy check tools for MSMEs, together with responses and feedbacks of relevant stakeholders to such practices, if any
- Prepare drafts of RBC toolkits that helps LGs to consider integration of RBC into their relevant policies with a set of introductory notes and/or PPT slide decks
- Help implement trial roll-out sessions of the toolkits with selected MSMEs and improve the content of the toolkits
- Prepare a brief analysis report, including the result of the trial roll-out sessions to identify opportunities, challenges, lessons learned and recommendation in relation to the toolkits

- Ad hoc support for Project Coordinator on the toolkit development and reporting related activities and documents as required

Deliverables and provisional timeline:

Expected total number of days are **70 days** – The days allocated to deliverables, and schedule are indicative and can be requested advance by or adjusted in consultation with the Project Coordinator. The consultant is required to submit the following deliverables and report the progress as requested by the Project Coordinator:

Assignment 0: Overall workplan (1 day)

Deliverable 0: 1-pager for overall workplan for the Assignment 1 and 2 in Japanese by 15th of July 2025

Assignment 1: Workshops/events (15 days)

- Deliverable 1-A: Up to 5 concept notes for workshops/events in English and Japanese, timely before the workshops/events, and in any case by the end of August 2025
- Deliverable 1-B: Up to 3 explanatory notes for reach-out to potential partners in Japanese, by the end of September 2025
- Deliverable 1-C: 1 slide deck for RBC/HRDD good practices by LGs, MSMEs and other stakeholders in Japanese, by the end of August 2025
- Deliverable 1-D: Up to 5 summary reports in Japanese and English, timely after the workshops/events, and in any case by the end of February 2026

Assignment 2: Enterprise case studies on RBC (24 days)

1. Deliverable 2-A: A study implementation plan in Japanese by the end of September 2025
2. Deliverable 2-B: Up to 3 explanatory notes for reach-out to potential partners in Japanese, by the end of September 2025
3. Deliverable 2-C: Interview questions and survey questionnaire in Japanese by the end of August 2025, and a summary report in Japanese by the end of November 2025
4. Deliverable 2-D: A case study report in Japanese and English by the end of February 2026

Assignment 3: RBC toolkits and analysis report (30 days)

1. Deliverable 3-A: Up to 3 draft RBC toolkits regarding RBC integration in English and Japanese, timely before the trial roll-out sessions, and in any case by the end of November 2025
2. Deliverable 3-B: An analysis report in relation to the toolkits in English and Japanese by the end of February 2026

ILO will review all deliverables and provide feedback on whether the product is in line with expectations of the ILO and its constituents and partners.

Payment modality

The consultant will submit invoice with the number of allocated days for activities. Regarding travels, if any, the consultant will submit a brief mission report and receipts in relation to travel costs. All payments will be made upon delivery of outputs to the satisfaction of the ILO.

Duration of the Assignment:

Contract term: FROM the day of the signing of the contract BY **31 March 2026**

Qualifications and Experience:

- University education in communications, journalism, development studies, social sciences, business, economics, law or related fields
- At least 5 years of working experience (of which at least 2 years are related to communications / report writing / qualitative research)
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing in Japanese/English;
- Excellent analytical and writing skills to effectively engage with diverse audiences.
- Good computer applications skills; and,
- Prior experience working with the ILO, technical knowledge of business and human rights, responsible business conduct and/or international labour standards is preferred.
- Understanding of the business sector, especially the perspective of the SMEs will be an advantage.
- Self-motivated and ability to work independently with minimal supervision in an outcome-based work culture as well as contributing to the work of a team.
- Good knowledge of Microsoft Office (such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, and Sharepoint), experience using digital tools for designing such as Canva is a plus.
- Ability to work in a multicultural environment and to demonstrate gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory behaviour and attitudes.

Location and Travel

To support the implementation of interviews conducted across Japan, the candidate needs to be available to travel. (Travel cost will be covered by ILO, and will be included in the contract and will be paid against the actual expenses.)

The primary location of this assignment is in Tokyo; thus, preference will be given to those who reside/ can commute to Tokyo metropolitan area for smooth implementation of deliverables. (Applicants should state their status in their cover letter. Please note that relocation cost will not be provided by ILO.)

Confidentiality Statement:

All data and information received from ILO for the purpose of this assignment are to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference (TOR). All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these TOR are assigned to the ILO. The contents of written materials obtained and used

in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advanced written authorization of the ILO and the abovementioned partner.

Submission of Application

Please submit your application by Monday, 30 June 2025 noon (JST) to Mr. Ryusuke Tanaka tanaka@ilo.org, copying Ms. Aki Chizuka chizuka@ilo.org, indicating in the subject line "EOI for External Collaborator: "Local Governments".

Please submit below documents as pdf attachments on the email:

- a copy of your CV
- a quotation in Japanese Yen including:
 - 70 days of work (daily rate)
- previous examples of written documents in Japanese and English (e.g) Published/unpublished articles, essays, reports from previous work or academic years.