In partnership with

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**SUBJECT:**

**Engagement of Capacity Development Providers (CDPs) to Deliver Capacity Development on Product Development for Women- and Youth-Owned Agrifood Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) for FinRISE Participating Fintechs, Microfinance Institutions, and SACCOs (FMSs)**

**REF: FinRISE/CDP-FMS/RFP/2026-02**

**Launching Date: $30^{th}$ July,2026**

**Closing Date: 7th August 2026**

**1700 Hrs EAT**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Engagement of Capacity Development Providers (CDPs) to Strengthen Product Development for Women- and Youth-Owned Agrifood Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) among FinRISE Participating Fintechs, Microfinance Institutions, and SACCOs (FMSs)**

**Programme:** FinRISE (African Guarantee Fund / FinRISE Fund, funded by the Mastercard Foundation)
**Reference No.:** FinRISE/CDP-FMS/RFP/2026-01
**Date:** 30th July 2026
**Countries of Assignment:** Kenya & Zambia

## 1. Background and Context

The **Financial Resilience through Institutional Strengthening and Expansion (FinRISE)** programme is a flagship initiative of the **African Guarantee Fund (AGF)**, supported by the **Mastercard Foundation**, to expand access to affordable and appropriate finance for women- and youth-led micro and small enterprises (MSEs) operating within the agri-food sector across **Kenya, Zambia, and Côte d'Ivoire**. Implemented as a three-year pilot, the programme responds to longstanding structural constraints that limit the ability of underserved entrepreneurs to access productive finance, particularly those operating in rural communities and agricultural value chains.

Women and young entrepreneurs continue to face disproportionate barriers to finance due to limited collateral, inadequate financial records, perceived lending risks, and financial products that are not aligned with the realities of agribusiness. These constraints reduce investment in productive enterprises, limit business growth, and ultimately affect employment creation, food security, and broader economic development. FinRISE was designed to address these systemic market failures by strengthening both the supply and demand sides of inclusive agricultural finance.

The programme adopts a market systems approach that combines innovative financial instruments with institutional capacity strengthening to create sustainable pathways for increased lending to underserved MSEs. On the supply side, FinRISE partners with FMSs (**Fintechs, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), and Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs)**) to expand their capacity and appetite for financing women- and youth-owned agrifood enterprises. Through the provision of **risk-sharing guarantees** and **concessional liquidity**, the programme reduces the perceived and actual risks associated with lending to underserved market segments while enabling participating financial institutions to increase the volume, affordability, and accessibility of productive credit.

The programme targets women entrepreneurs and youth aged **18 to 35 years**, recognising that these groups continue to experience the greatest exclusion from formal financial systems despite representing a significant proportion of the agricultural workforce and enterprise base. By addressing the financial constraints faced by these entrepreneurs, FinRISE seeks to unlock investment in productive enterprises, strengthen value chains, and stimulate inclusive economic growth.

Recognising that access to finance alone is insufficient to achieve sustainable outcomes, FinRISE places equal emphasis on strengthening the institutional capacity of participating FMSs to sustainably increase on-lending to women- and youth-owned agrifood MSEs. The programme delivers targeted technical assistance focused on the institutional capabilities that directly influence lending performance and portfolio growth. These interventions include gender-responsive product development, credit risk management and appraisal, portfolio quality management, digital financial service delivery, data management and disaggregated reporting, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems. In addition, FinRISE integrates cross-cutting areas such as environmental and social risk management, safeguarding, and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) to ensure that FMSs adopt inclusive, responsible, and sustainable lending practices while strengthening their ability to effectively serve women- and youth-owned agrifood MSEs.

On the demand side, FinRISE supports MSEs through market-responsive capacity development aimed at improving enterprise readiness for finance. This includes strengthening financial literacy, business planning, record keeping, loan application preparedness, productivity enhancement, climate-smart business practices, market linkages, and digital adoption. These interventions improve the ability of enterprises to absorb and effectively utilise financing, resulting in stronger business performance, improved loan repayment, increased productivity, business resilience, and employment generation.

The programme is implemented through an integrated results framework that combines financial inclusion, institutional strengthening, and enterprise development to achieve sustainable development outcomes. By addressing both financial market constraints and enterprise capacity gaps, FinRISE seeks to create a commercially viable ecosystem in which financial institutions are better equipped to serve underserved market segments, while women- and youth-led agrifood MSEs gain access to the finance, knowledge, and business support required to grow sustainably.

Ultimately, FinRISE aims to demonstrate a scalable model for inclusive agricultural finance that strengthens financial systems, promotes gender equality and youth economic empowerment, enhances rural livelihoods, and contributes to resilient agricultural value chains across Africa.

## 2. Purpose and Objectives of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to engage qualified Capacity Development Providers (CDPs) to strengthen the capacity of participating FMSs to sustainably increase on-lending to women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs through the design, development, testing, and deployment of inclusive, market-responsive financial products.

The assignment will support FMSs to adopt a **Human-Centred Design (HCD)** approach to product development, enabling them to better understand the needs, aspirations, business models, cash flow patterns, and constraints of women and youth agrifood entrepreneurs. Using customer insights and value chain analysis, FMSs will co-create financial solutions that are commercially viable, accessible, affordable, and responsive to the realities of underserved agrifood MSEs.

As a core feature of the product development process, the assignment will integrate FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) principles throughout every stage of the Human-Centred Design process, from customer research and product conceptualisation to prototype testing, refinement, and market rollout. This will ensure that financial products are designed and delivered in a manner that is inclusive, equitable, responsible, and aligned with the programme's commitment to "Do No Harm," while addressing the structural barriers that limit women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other underserved populations from accessing appropriate financial services.

### Specific Objectives

- Strengthen the capacity of participating FMSs to apply a Human-Centred Design (HCD) approach in the development and refinement of inclusive, market-responsive financial products that address the diverse financing needs of women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs across priority value chains.

- Build the capacity of FMSs to conduct customer research, market segmentation, customer journey mapping, value chain analysis, and co-creation processes that generate actionable insights for designing customer-centric financial products.

- Support FMSs to design commercially viable financial products that are aligned with the production cycles, cash flow patterns, risk profiles, and investment needs of women and youth agrifood entrepreneurs, while improving accessibility, affordability, and usability.

- Strengthen the integration of FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding principles throughout the product development lifecycle by ensuring that customer engagement, product features, communication approaches, and service delivery mechanisms minimise the risk of harm, promote client protection, uphold ethical financing practices, and establish appropriate safeguarding referral and grievance mechanisms where applicable.

- Strengthen the integration of Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) principles into product design by addressing barriers related to gender, age, disability, geographic location, and socio-economic vulnerability, thereby improving equitable access to financial services for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other underserved groups within agrifood value chains.

- Support FMSs to develop and pilot product prototypes using iterative design methodologies, incorporating customer feedback to validate product relevance, usability, customer experience, and commercial viability before full-scale deployment.

- Build the capacity of FMS staff to institutionalise Human-Centred Design, Safeguarding, and GEDSI principles within their product development policies, processes, governance structures, and operational procedures to promote continuous innovation and inclusive product development.

- Support participating FMSs to operationalise the newly developed financial products through implementation roadmaps, product manuals, customer engagement tools, staff training, and monitoring frameworks that facilitate sustainable and increased on-lending to women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs.

## 3. Scope of Work

The CDP will deliver targeted technical assistance to participating FMSs in two priority areas that directly influence their ability to sustainably increase lending to women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs. The assignment is intentionally focused on strengthening the institutional capabilities that have the greatest impact on expanding access to finance, improving portfolio quality, and developing financial products that respond to the realities of underserved agrifood enterprises.

### 3.1 Human-Centred Design (HCD) Product Development for Women- and Youth-Owned Agrifood MSEs

The CDP shall support participating FMSs to adopt a **Human-Centred Design (HCD)** approach in designing, testing, refining, and operationalising inclusive financial products that respond to the diverse financing needs of women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs across priority agricultural value chains.

The assignment shall strengthen the institutional capacity of FMSs to systematically understand customer needs, behaviours, business models, production cycles, and financing constraints through customer research and value chain analysis, translating these insights into commercially viable, customer-centric financial products. Throughout the product development lifecycle, the CDP shall integrate **FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding** and **Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)** principles to ensure that financial products are inclusive, accessible, equitable, responsible, and aligned with the programme's commitment to **"Do No Harm."**

The assignment shall support FMSs beyond product design by facilitating prototype development, customer validation, product refinement, institutional adoption, and market rollout to ensure sustainable implementation and continuous product improvement.

**Key Tasks**

**Human-Centred Customer Research and Product Discovery**

- Conduct institutional assessments to evaluate existing agrifood financial products, product development processes, and organisational readiness for Human-Centred Design.
- Undertake customer research using Human-Centred Design methodologies, including customer interviews, focus group discussions, customer journey mapping, empathy mapping, financial diaries, value chain analysis, and market assessments to understand the financing needs, behaviours, aspirations, and constraints of women and youth agrifood entrepreneurs.
- Segment target customers based on enterprise characteristics, value chain participation, financing requirements, business maturity, and customer personas to inform differentiated product design.

**Inclusive Product Design and Development**

- Facilitate co-creation workshops involving FMS staff, women and youth entrepreneurs, producer organisations, value chain actors, and relevant ecosystem partners to jointly develop customer-centred financial solutions.
- Design or refine agrifood financial products that respond to customer needs through appropriate loan purposes, financing limits, repayment structures aligned to agricultural production cycles, flexible repayment options, alternative collateral approaches, digital delivery channels, and customer support mechanisms.
- Ensure that product features are evidence-based and validated through customer insights and market analysis while maintaining commercial viability and institutional sustainability.

**Integration of FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding**

- Integrate FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding principles throughout the Human-Centred Design process to ensure that customer engagement, product features, communication approaches, and service delivery mechanisms minimise the risk of harm and uphold responsible finance principles.
- Ensure that product design incorporates customer protection measures, informed consent, confidentiality, ethical marketing practices, accessible complaints and grievance mechanisms, referral pathways where appropriate, and safeguards against discrimination, exploitation, harassment, and exclusion.

**Integration of Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)**

- Embed GEDSI principles across all stages of the product development process to identify and address barriers affecting women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other underserved populations.
- Ensure that product eligibility criteria, application processes, communication materials, delivery channels, and customer engagement approaches promote equitable access to financial services and accommodate the diverse needs of target customer segments.
- Develop practical recommendations that enable FMSs to institutionalise inclusive product development practices within their operations.

**Prototype Development, Testing and Validation**

- Develop product prototypes and pilot selected financial products with representative customer segments across targeted agrifood value chains.

- Facilitate customer testing sessions to assess product relevance, usability, accessibility, affordability, customer experience, and operational feasibility.
- Analyse pilot results and customer feedback to refine product features before full-scale deployment.

**Product Operationalisation**

- Develop or update product manuals, standard operating procedures, implementation guidelines, customer engagement tools, marketing materials, and internal operational documentation required to support successful product rollout.
- Support FMSs to integrate the new products into their operational systems, internal policies, digital platforms, staff workflows, and governance structures.
- Facilitate staff readiness through coaching, mentoring, and practical implementation support during the initial rollout period.

**Monitoring, Learning and Continuous Improvement**

- Develop a product monitoring and learning framework with indicators that measure customer outreach, product uptake, customer satisfaction, inclusion outcomes, utilisation, business performance, and product sustainability.
- Establish customer feedback mechanisms that enable continuous learning and iterative product refinement based on customer experience and market dynamics.
- Support FMSs to review product performance periodically and develop action plans for continuous product enhancement.

**Institutional Capacity Strengthening**

- Build the capacity of Board members, Senior Management, Product Development Teams, Business Development Officers, Customer Relationship Officers, and other relevant staff on Human-Centred Design methodologies, inclusive product development, FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding, GEDSI integration, and customer-centred innovation.
- Strengthen institutional systems and governance processes to embed Human-Centred Design as a sustainable organisational capability beyond the duration of the assignment.

**Expected Outputs**

- Human-Centred Design assessment report, including customer insights, market analysis, value chain assessment, customer personas, and customer journey maps.
- New or enhanced inclusive agrifood financial products developed using Human-Centred Design methodologies and tailored to women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs.
- FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and GEDSI principles fully integrated into product design methodologies, product features, operational processes, and customer engagement approaches.
- Product prototypes developed, tested, validated, and refined based on customer feedback and pilot implementation.
- Product manuals, operational guidelines, implementation tools, customer communication materials, and marketing resources developed and adopted by participating FMSs.
- Financial products successfully operationalised and integrated into institutional systems and business processes.
- Product monitoring, customer feedback, and continuous learning framework established with agreed performance indicators.
- Capacity of Board members, Management, and operational staff strengthened to sustainably manage, innovate, monitor, and improve inclusive financial products.
- Increased institutional capacity of participating FMSs to sustainably design, deliver, and scale customer-centred financial products that expand access to finance for women- and youth-owned agrifood MSEs.

In addition to the activity-specific outputs described in Section 3, the CDP shall submit the following deliverables for each participating FMS.

| Deliverable | Description | Indicative Due Date |
|---|---|---|
| **Inception Report** | Detailed workplan, implementation methodology, Human-Centred Design (HCD) approach, stakeholder engagement plan, implementation schedule, baseline assessment of the FMS's product development capacity and institutional readiness, customer research methodology, and the proposed approach for integrating FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and GEDSI principles throughout the product development lifecycle. | Within two (2) weeks of contract signature |
| **Customer Research and Product Discovery Report** | Documentation of customer research activities, including customer segmentation, value chain analysis, customer personas, empathy mapping, customer journey mapping, market assessment findings, identification of customer pain points and opportunities, and product design recommendations informed by customer insights. | Within one (1) month of commencement |
| **Product Design and Prototype Report** | Documentation of the Human-Centred Design process, co-creation workshops, product concepts, prototype development, integration of FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and GEDSI principles, customer validation results, product refinement, and recommended product specifications for implementation. | Within two (2) months of commencement |
| **Product Operationalisation and Capacity Building Report** | Product manuals, standard operating procedures, implementation guidelines, customer communication and marketing materials, evidence of product rollout support, staff capacity-building activities, coaching and mentoring sessions, and institutional measures undertaken to embed Human-Centred Design, Safeguarding, and GEDSI within the FMS's product development processes. | Within three (3) months of commencement |
| **Final Assignment Report** | Consolidated report detailing activities undertaken, deliverables achieved, customer research findings, product development outcomes, implementation progress, institutional capacity improvements, lessons learned, challenges encountered, recommendations for continuous product improvement, and a sustainability roadmap for embedding Human-Centred Design within the FMS. | Within fifteen (15) days after completion of the assignment |

### Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting

Throughout the assignment, the CDP shall establish and maintain a continuous monitoring, learning, and reporting process to track the implementation and effectiveness of the Human-Centred Design approach and the performance of the newly developed financial products.

The CDP shall periodically report on, at a minimum:

- Progress in implementing the Human-Centred Design methodology within the FMS.
- Customer research findings and key insights informing product development.
- Number of customer engagement activities conducted, including interviews, focus group discussions, co-creation workshops, and prototype testing sessions.
- Development and validation of customer personas, customer journey maps, and value chain analyses.
- Progress in integrating FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and GEDSI principles throughout the product development process.
- Number of new or enhanced financial products developed, tested, and operationalised.

- Product uptake, customer adoption, and utilisation by women- and youth-owned and led agrifood MSEs.
- Customer satisfaction and feedback collected during prototype testing and early implementation.
- Capacity-building activities delivered to the Board, Management, Product Development Teams, and operational staff.
- Institutional improvements in Human-Centred Design capability, inclusive product development practices, and customer-centred innovation.
- Lessons learned, implementation challenges, and recommendations for product refinement and scale-up.

All reports shall include sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data, together with qualitative evidence demonstrating how Human-Centred Design, FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding, and GEDSI principles have contributed to the development of inclusive, accessible, responsible, and market-responsive financial products for women- and youth-owned agrifood MSEs.

## 4. Duration of the Assignment and Institutional Arrangements

The assignment shall be completed within **three (3) months** for each participating FMS.

The CDP shall report directly to the FinRISE Programme Management Team at AGF and work closely with the FMS's Board, Management and designated implementation staff throughout the assignment.

## 5. Reporting Requirements

The CDP shall submit progress reports in the format prescribed by AGF and shall provide evidence demonstrating progress against the agreed deliverables and key performance indicators.

Reporting shall include, at a minimum:

- Progress against agreed workplans and deliverables.
- Status of product development, launch and market uptake.
- Progress in strengthening credit appraisal, alternative credit scoring and loan recovery systems.
- Number and value of loans disbursed under the enhanced products.
- Portfolio performance indicators.
- Data disaggregated by sex, age and value chain.
- Key implementation challenges, mitigation measures and recommendations.

All reporting shall comply with AGF and Mastercard Foundation reporting requirements and timelines.

## 6. Qualifications and Team Composition

**Institutional Requirements**

Interested firms shall demonstrate:

- A minimum of five (5) years' experience supporting financial institutions to design, develop, test, and operationalise inclusive financial products using customer-centred or Human-Centred Design (HCD) approaches for MSMEs and/or agrifood finance.
- Demonstrated experience in designing and implementing market-responsive, gender-responsive, and youth-inclusive financial products for financial institutions, including banks, MFIs, SACCOs, fintechs, and other financial service providers.

- Demonstrated knowledge of **agricultural value chains**, including production systems, value chain financing, market dynamics, seasonal cash flows, and the financing needs and constraints of agrifood MSEs across key value chains.
- Proven experience facilitating customer research, market assessments, value chain analysis, customer journey mapping, product prototyping, pilot testing, and product refinement.
- Demonstrated expertise in integrating Human-Centred Design (HCD) methodologies into financial product development and institutional innovation processes.
- Demonstrated experience integrating FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) principles into financial product design and customer engagement processes.
- Proven experience working with financial institutions and agrifood value chain actors in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Demonstrated experience delivering institutional capacity development, coaching, mentoring, and technical assistance to financial institutions.
- Presence, or the ability to deploy qualified experts, within Kenya, Zambia, and/or Côte d'Ivoire.

**Indicative Key Experts**

The proposed team should include, at a minimum, the following key experts:

- Team Leader / Human-Centred Design and Inclusive Finance Specialist
- Financial Product Development Specialist
- Agricultural Value Chain Finance Specialist
- Market Research and Customer Insights Specialist
- FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and GEDSI Specialist

The proposed team should collectively demonstrate expertise in Human-Centred Design, inclusive finance, agricultural value chains, agrifood value chain finance, customer research, product innovation, institutional capacity development, adult learning methodologies, and the integration of FinRISE Contextualised Safeguarding and GEDSI principles into financial product development. Experience supporting financial institutions to design and operationalise customer-centred financial products for women- and youth-owned agrifood MSEs will be considered a distinct advantage.

**Country-Specific Eligibility**

This Request for Proposal (RFP) covers assignments in **Kenya, Zambia, and Côte d'Ivoire**. Consultants or consulting firms may submit proposals for one or more of these countries.

For each country applied for, the consultant or consulting firm must demonstrate that it is **legally registered and has an established operational presence in that country**. Evidence of legal registration and operational presence (such as a certificate of incorporation/business registration, local office, or other documentary evidence) may be requested during the evaluation process.

Proposals for a country where the applicant does not have a legal and operational presence shall not be considered.

## 7. Selection Criteria

Technical proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

| Evaluation Criterion | Weight |
|---|---|
| Relevant institutional experience | 30% |
| Quality of methodology and implementation approach | 30% |
| Qualifications and experience of proposed experts | 25% |

| Evaluation Criterion | Weight |
|---|---|
| Financial proposal and value for money | 15% |

Only proposals achieving the minimum technical threshold established by AGF shall proceed to financial evaluation.

## 8. Safeguarding and GEDSI Requirements

The CDP shall integrate the FinRISE Safeguarding Framework and GEDSI Framework throughout the assignment.

This includes ensuring that:

- Product design is inclusive and responsive to the needs of women and youth.
- Credit appraisal methodologies minimise bias and promote equitable access to finance.
- Staff are trained on responsible lending, safeguarding, client protection and the **Do No Harm** principle.
- All customer engagement processes respect confidentiality, accessibility, dignity and inclusion.
- Training materials, operational manuals and implementation tools fully incorporate FinRISE safeguarding and GEDSI requirements.

Safeguarding and GEDSI shall be treated as embedded cross-cutting principles throughout the assignment and not as standalone workstreams.

## 9. Indicative Budget

The assignment shall be financed under the FinRISE Capacity Development budget.

Contract values shall be determined through AGF's procurement process and shall reflect the scope of work, number of participating FMSs and agreed deliverables

## 10. Proposal Submission Requirements

Interested firms shall submit the following as part of their proposal:

**Technical Proposal**

The technical proposal should, at a minimum, include:

- A brief profile of the consulting firm.
- Demonstrated experience in undertaking similar assignments.
- An understanding of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the proposed approach to delivering the assignment.

**Statutory Compliance Documents**

The following documents should be submitted as annexes to the proposal:

- Tax Authority PIN Certificate.
- Valid Tax Compliance Certificate.
- Certificate of Business Registration/Incorporation.
- Registration with relevant professional bodies (where applicable).

- Any other statutory documents relevant to the assignment.

**Financial Proposal**

- A detailed cost estimate for the services to be rendered.
- All prices must be quoted inclusive of all applicable taxes and any other statutory obligations.

**Key Personnel**

- Curriculum Vitae (CVs) of the proposed key experts.

**References**

- At least three (3) references from clients for whom similar assignments have been successfully completed.

## 11. Submission of Proposals

Proposals MUST be submitted electronically to procurement@agf.africa no later than **Tuesday, 7th August 2026 at 17:00 hrs (EAT).**

**Expression of Interest**

Interested consulting firms are requested to register their interest in participating in this RFP no later than **Tuesday 4th August 2026,** even as they continue working on their proposals by sending an email to procurement@agf.africa with the subject line:

**"Expression of Interest – [RFP Title] – [Country]"**

The email should include:

- Name of the consulting firm;
- Contact person;
- Email address;
- Telephone number; and
- Country(ies) for which the proposal will be submitted (Kenya, Zambia, and/or Côte d'Ivoire).

Only registered interested bidders will receive any clarifications, responses to requests for information, amendments, or addenda issued during the procurement process. Failure to register an expression of interest may result in the bidder not receiving important communications relating to this RFP.

**Evaluation and Award**

Only the successful firm(s) will be contacted directly via email. The evaluation, shortlisting and selection of proposals shall be conducted in accordance with AGF's Procurement Policies, Rules and Procedures.

**Disclaimer**

**Note:**

AGF reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to accept or reject any proposal, in whole or in part, and to annul the solicitation process at any stage without incurring any liability to the participating firms. Such decisions shall be final, and AGF shall not enter into correspondence regarding the evaluation or selection process other than notifying bidders of the outcome.